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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Learning From Each Other: The English Teacher on a Hutterite Colony

by

Kathleen Dobson

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Masters of Education

IN

International/Intercultural Education

Department of Educational Foundations

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Spring, 1992

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis titled Learning From Each Other: the English Teacher on a Hutterite Colony submitted by Kathleen Dobson in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education in International/Intercultural Education.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis may be termed a reflexive ethnography. It charts the search for meaning by an English teacher, myself, of my experiences on the Athabasca Hutterite Colony during my six years tenure there. This teaching position, generally held in low esteem because of the many grades to be taught in a strange cultural environment, held many surprises and rewards for me.

From the Hutterite people in their daily life, from the school children, from relevant scholarly writings about the origins, socialization, and religious beliefs of the Hutterian Brethren, from reflections on my daily journal entries, an understanding began to evolve of who the Hutterites were, of what kind of education would be appropriate for their children, and of who I was as a teacher in their community. Four other teachers of English school on this colony reflected on their experiences and these observations act as a counterpoint to mine.

Despite many factors that conspired to make this teaching position difficult, the opportunities for personal and professional growth have been many. This thesis may dispel some of the myths about teaching on a Hutterite colony and in doing so, encourage more teachers to be open to the potential of learning more about themselves by accepting this challenge.

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My thanks to Dr. Marilyn Assheton - Smith for her unfailing guidance and mentoring that gave me faith that I was equal to the task. To my committee members, Dr. Carl Urion, Dr. Therese Craig, and Dr. Nick Tkach I also wish to express my gratitude. Your diverse talents have enriched my thoughts and effort.

I wish to express my gratitude to the people who comprise the Athabasca Hutterian Brethren. To me, you are like my special family that has taught me the lessons of patience, tolerance, kindness, humbleness, austerity, cooperation and faith by the example of the life you live. I will never forget

Finally, to my husband and my sons, my loving gratitude for your support and understanding that encouraged me to persevere with this undertaking.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Thesis Problem

This thesis reflects my struggle to become the best teacher that I could be, for the benefit of the children and myself, while working in the unfamiliar environment of a Hutterite colony. When I began teaching there, I did not realize the extent to which I would be the learner as well as the teacher. The experience has opened up for me many vistas for personal and professional growth.

I spent six years on the Hutterite Colony, and in an attempt to give meaning to some of the troublesome or puzzling happenings in the classroom, I kept a daily journal. This thesis is drawn primarily from the personal experience reflected in that journal, in hopes that it will produce a contribution to other teachers searching for similar understandings of themselves and of their classrooms. In particular, it is directed to other teachers who may spend part or all of their career teaching in a Hutterite community. Although it is believed that this material will be useful to others, it is important to note that this case study is limited in that it applies to the experience of one teacher only, myself, and to one specific Hutterite community, the Athabasca Colony.

The puzzlement, the question, that the thesis addresses is what is the nature of the teaching role and task in a Hutterite Colony? A number of other questions follow from this one. What are the contradictions that arise when a teacher with contemporary university teacher education tries to fulfill that teaching role? Who are the Hutterites in history, and how does their culture impact on the teaching task? How does one, as a teacher, meet the needs of the Hutterite Colony and feel successful as a professional teacher? From these and related questions flow this thesis.

The methodology is that of reflexive ethnography. The years spent in the Hutterite classroom and community provides observational material, recorded in my journal, which forms the core of this work. Interviews with four teachers who had also worked on the same Hutterite Colony provided additional information and observations to test against my own experience.

To assist me interpret and understand that experience, I have drawn on selected writings in education and social theory, and writers who describe the Hutterian Brethren. In the first group are LaBelle,

Freire, Marx, and Geertz; in the second are primarily Clasen, Hostetler, and Peter. In the concluding chapter I address the effect that community solidarity, exclusivity, piety and authority have on me as a teacher in this setting.

Although the main focus of the thesis is my own experience in the classroom, and as such much of the material would be considered "public" as long as individuals are not identified, it did seem that ethically I should advise the Hutterite Colony that I was writing the thesis and be sure they would not object. The person who could best speak in a modest position of authority for the colony was the German teacher. He told me it was all right for me to write of the colony in this work.[1]

A Beginning Introduction to the Hutterite Community

The Hutterite Colony at which I taught was the Athabasca Colony, which the Hutterites themselves also refer to as the Whispering Hills Colony. It is on Highway 2, nine miles west and approximately one mile north of Athabasca, Alberta. The buildings nestle in a hollow off the road and its shelter belt of trees keeps the colony's identity hidden from those who pass by. Some of its property borders Baptiste Lake, a creek runs behind the barns, and the colony farm land runs north along the highway for some miles.

Not all Hutterite colonies are the same. Because they derive from three different leaders, they are divided into three different Leuts, the word Leut meaning people. The Athabasca Colony belongs to the Dariusleut and so they affiliate with other colonies who belong to the same leut, visiting and intermarrying with them. All Hutterites share the same beliefs, but in their organization there may be slight differences. Even within the leut, there may be differences in the organization and operation of each colony. Minor differences in customs can be attributed to family customs and leadership patterns.

The Athabasca Colony has a relatively small population. It had fifty-seven people when I taught there last in 1987. The fathers of the

---

1 My husband and I went to visit the German teacher and his wife, and after a cup of herbal tea I told him that I was writing a thesis at the university in Edmonton about my teaching and that I would be mentioning the colony in what I was writing. I explained that there was an ethics committee that required that I inform them of this. Ben didn't hesitate. He said," That's all right. You go ahead." His wife asked if it would be in a book and I replied no, that it would only be for the university. Ben repeated, "That's all right."

school children were six brothers plus one other family who had a different surname. These brothers had been socialized to live and work together from infancy. When they found a girl to marry, she came to their colony to live, work and have children. This generation of brothers and wives did the bulk of the farm work, although everyone had some meaningful work to do.

The grandfather of all the school children, except the three girls from the other family, was the preacher. He was the final authority on the colony. Members of his generation, with the addition of his eldest son, made up the colony council. His youngest son was the second preacher and German school teacher.

The families ranged in size from two to five children. Like families in our society, the size of the family seems to be decreasing, for the grandmother told me that she had had nine children. The boys in the school would be the next generation of workers to support the colony and allow their communal society to exist and persist.

The colony had moved to Athabasca from Rockyford, Alberta in 1962. The young men worked in local sawmills to earn money to establish the farm. Until a school of their own could be constructed in 1964, the children from the colony attended a nearby one room school at Lahaieville. Despite a low school population, the Hutterites wanted a school of their own for their children.

In the early years, the people lived in old farm houses that were on the property. These were difficult years of hardship. At least five young men left the colony in this period to live on the outside. The farm was not an economical venture until fertilizer and herbicides were used, the grandmother told me. Because the need to be economically independent came first, necessities such as running water and modern bathrooms were not added to the homes until the late 1970's.

The ability to be self-sufficient on the part of the Hutterites was evident in their diet. Nearly all parts of the animals were used; soup was made from chicken feet, a meal of gizzards and necks, and delicious homemade noodles made from the eggs inside the butchered chickens; the list is long. All bones and fat that might be wasted became soap or animal feed. Austerity was a necessity when the colony was first established and it is their tradition and custom to waste not, want not. The contrast between the colony and the community outside was stark in this respect.

The clothing was made by the women in the family using their own patterns for skirts, blouses, shirts, pants and jackets. Cloth was bought from a travelling salesman who catered to their tastes for black and dark printed material that was easy to wash and wear without ironing. Everyone was entitled to an equitable yardage. The women had the very best and most modern sewing machines to help them with this task.

Central to all activities on the colony was the big, silver bell that stood outside the kitchen. When the people were to be called, its rope was tugged and its loud peal could be heard over all the large farm yard. Meal time, work time, church, when there was a fire, the bell alerted everyone to gather.

My first impression of the children was to remark to the previous teacher, who was dressed in a flannel shirt and corduroy slacks, that they seemed like primitive children. Without hesitation, she agreed with me. Thinking back, it probably was the cultural differences that prompted my remark; their different dress, their speech in loud tones that caused me to start, their earthy language, their obvious freedom in speech and action. I was to learn of many differences in the following years, such as that greetings of hello and goodbye were not customary on a daily basis.

The Athabasca Colony is a traditional mixed farm, raising different types of poultry, geese, ducks, chickens for egg production and for meat; hogs from farrow to finish; beef cattle; dairy cattle for milk production; sheep for the table; and various kinds of cereal grains and canola for feed and for sale. They also operate a market garden. The work is done cooperatively and the work roles are assigned traditionally. The well designed farm is improved every year and the up to date machinery is every farmer's dream. There are no other colonies in this immediate area. The Pibroch colony is the closest and visits between these colonies are frequent. There is also much networking between this colony and its daughter colony at Hughenden and the colonies from which the mothers came.

The Hutterites may sometimes be seen in Athabasca. A trip to the dentist or doctor, or to get something for the farm, or to do business at a local store, might bring them to town. They travel in the company of one another. They often asked me if I am not afraid, travelling by myself.

The reaction of the local people to the Hutterites is on the whole accepting, although often devoid of understanding. I was told of one of the men who used to work in the evenings for a local man, in order to earn money before he was married. People who run a sports store tell me that they watch the children for shoplifting when they come in. A teacher who travelled with one of the men said that he couldn't believe that they were religious because of the language that the fellow used. When an agreeable neighbor's permits them to come to his home to watch the Oilers on television, they come in a group. Because television is forbidden on the colony, people cannot understand why it is all right for the Hutterites to watch it outside. Radios are also taboo on the colony but the children love western music and pester an outsider visiting the colony to listen to his car radio.

When I actually became involved in teaching at the colony, I found the commitment to be different than that in a town school; it was more than just teaching the children. Because I daily ate dinner with the people, I began to know them as individuals, each with their own personality and distinct character. I began to follow the routines of their daily life, and to understand the place of work in their lives. I participated in their religious ritual of prayer before and after meals. I was asked to let the men leave the dining area before I did, and complied. Whenever a major task was undertaken, like soap making or butchering, I was taken by the children to observe. As I walked back to school at noon, I watched the fathers sometimes tease but always care for the youngest children. The adults were unfailingly kind to me, yet sometimes they were indifferent and would appear to not see me. I noted this difference, but could not account for it. I felt shy in this strange environment and kept my thoughts to myself, only sometimes asking questions.

Day by day, I began to feel a part of the colony, as I participated in my limited role in the rhythm of daily routines. Existing there for seven hours every school day, I could not help being affected by what I observed and experienced. I found much of their way of life to be admirable. Where there were differences with my own value system, I did not dismiss them casually, but carefully considered them.

When I began to teach at the Hutterite colony, I did not intend to do this study. I planned to teach the children to the best of my ability, but not stay too long. That there were unknown cultural factors I would have to face and problems to solve was accepted. The previous

teachers were not available or spoke of the colony school in what appeared to me to be prejudicial terms. The teacher before me had been in a state of conflict with the children. Some of her advice did not seem to be appropriate once I became acquainted with the colony.

After three months when I was no longer someone novel and stimulating to the children, their behaviour in the school became a problem. Some of the kinds of behaviour I recognized from knowing other children, but some of it seemed different from what I had experienced elsewhere. I was unsure how to cope. I began to keep a daily journal for reflection, as I had been taught to do in my teacher education. Sometimes I was rewarded with an insight into what was so perplexing, often I gained no such insights. As principal and teacher, my authority in the school seemed to be rooted in air...there was no one convenient to ask for advice or from whom to seek support.

By this time, I had developed a little understanding of what it means to be a Hutterite. The children, the people and their social organization I found highly interesting. Despite the problems, there were enough successes and good times for me to stay that year, then another, until I had been there five years. During the five years, I did receive support and cooperation from the superintendent of schools and the people on the colony.

The same kinds of patterns of perplexing problems in the school persisted throughout the five years. I wondered if by better understanding who the Hutterite people are, I would be able to deal more successfully with classroom behaviors. By this time, I had formed close attachments to the children and many of the adults on the colony. My conundrum was that I did not want to leave but I felt that I could not stay. Not just for my sake, but also for that of the children, some of the problems had to be addressed and a solution found. I entered the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Alberta and began to study intercultural and international education.

The more that I read and researched the life of the Hutterites and their beliefs, the more that I recognized the reason that certain things occurred on the Athabasca colony. It was awe inspiring to read of the origins of the sect in 1536 and be able to equate the rational of their early beliefs with how the people lived on the Athabasca Colony now. I know of no other group of people who have carried their history forward into the present in the same way.

After my year at the University of Alberta I returned to teach in the colony school and, as I had done in earlier years, each evening after school I would write down events of the school day that were of significance to me. Some of the information pertained to the children's academic progress, some of it related to inappropriate behaviour in the classroom, some of it to behaviours that fit neither of these two categories but that I found puzzling. I tried to be nonjudgmental about what I observed. All of these events affected the learning environment in the school, and affected my performance as the English teacher on the colony.

My main purpose in writing of my experiences is to provide some information for other teachers who may be teaching at a colony or planning to teach at one, and to expand their understanding of what it is like to be the teacher on a Hutterite colony. By discovering the importance to the Hutterites of their past history and origin, teachers on Hutterite colonies might feel encouraged to prepare for this special teaching task by studying the Hutterites' values and beliefs and the religious bias that penetrates all colony thought and action.

The teacher, armed with some understanding and with an accepting attitude, will be able to appreciate that the social institutions of the colony, while different from ours, are very effective and serve them well. The Hutterites often model values and behaviours that we could learn from and possibly adapt to our benefit. Lastly, I hope that the reader will see that the Hutterites, although characterized by their different speech, dress, and culture, share with us our humanity. Tolerance for those who are different follows when we can share our strengths and weaknesses, our foibles and our pleasures and know that they are part of us all.

The thesis is written in seven chapters. It begins with this introduction followed by a brief summary of the origins and constancy of the Hutterite sect. Chaper three, four and five are data chapters. Chapter three describes my first five years at the colony as I slowly became familiar with the people and the place, four deals with my sixth year at the colony which followed my year of university studies, and five reports on the interviews with other teachers. The sixth chapter presents insights gained from scholars whose writings relate to the Hutterite experience. In the final and seventh chapter are my conclusions.

Having been away from the colony for four years at this point in time, I still feel the binding emotional attachment with the people. I do not see them often. It's as if having made a conscious choice to leave, then it is my place to stay away; I have gone away to my own world and left them in theirs. Yet, I am constantly aware of the personal growth and professional growth that this teaching experience has afforded me.

2. THE ORIGIN AND CONSTANCY OF THE HUTTERITE SECT

History of the Hutterites

The Hutterites belong to the Anabaptist movement which began in 1525 in German society and was composed mainly of peasants and craftsmen who rejected infant baptism and were seriously concerned with their salvation. They were the most radical advocates for the community of property, declaring that by divine and human law, all things must be held in common to avoid malice, greed and envy. The community of goods was also an expression of the commandment to "Love thy neighbor as thyself." This was a fundamental doctrine preached by Jakob Hutter, and the social arrangements into communal communities separated the Hutterites from all other Anabaptists. Clasen (1972) examined closely the social history of the Anabaptist movement, and Hostetler (1974) described in detail contemporary Hutterite communities. Peter (1965, 1967) sought to understand how the Hutterites have managed to persist through the centuries. These three authors are the primary sources for the material presented in this chapter.

The Anabaptist movement started during the time of the Reformation when an evangelical group rejected Catholic doctrine and refused Luther's reformation as incomplete. Anabaptists took baptism very seriously. It was through baptism that the believer entered the community of saints and the disciples of Christ had been baptised when they were adults. Yet, infant baptism had been practised in the Christian church for a thousand years. Anabaptists thoughtfully and critically denied infant baptism because a child was not of sensible faith, so a child could not understand the meaning of having a covenant with God. Furthermore, although a potential sinner, a child did not know evil. Therefore, if a child should die, he would still enter the kingdom of heaven. This decision of the Anabaptists was critical for the development of the new church of true believers.

Although many Anabaptists groups attempted to live communally, only the Hutterites were successful and this created a gap between Hutterites and others. To live like true Christians, the Hutterites established their community of goods and changed for themselves the European institutions of the family and finance. The Hutterites had reflected on these institutions and decided that they were not compatible with God's Word. The withdrawal of the Hutterite people, separate from the world, to congregate in Moravia in the early 1520's, was a quiet revolution despite the turbulent times.

Prior to the Reformation in Germany, medieval society could be depicted as having a cooperative nature. Engels (1892) clearly pictures this

earlier society. The people were grouped by kin and by having common property in the soil. A number of allied villages formed a mark; a hundred marks would form a shire. The sum total of shires was "the people themselves." The land was utilized by everyone; by the mark, by the village, by the shire and by the king, but at each stage some land was available to be used in common. Everyone could earn himself a living. No one had advantage over the other as each worker had an equal share in the soil and his right to use it. The governing of society, its legislation, administration, and jurisdiction were seen to be fair and equitable for all. The mark organization was wonderfully adaptive until those with power, the nobility and clergy, took it from the people.

With the rise of capitalist forms of enterprise in the sixteenth century, the nature of the guilds was changed and social harmony was disturbed. Economic and political power were given to the large land-holders and the king. The churches actively participated to share these new powers. The laws and customs of the land had to adapt to fit the new social order.

The rejection of the ruling classes became part of Anabaptist ideology (Clasen, 1972). They condemned the church that actively participated to share the new economic powers, as being too rich and comfortable to lead anyone to salvation. The new laws and customs derived to meet the needs of the developing social order resulted in the total alienation of the peasants. They rejected the new political structure and the authority of the church. The Anabaptist Hutterites longed to return the social order to what it had been.

> The believer's church, demanding a moral commitment from each adult member, tried to rebuild the old unity between belief and behavior (Peter, 1965:151).

The early Hutterites sent out missionaries to attract dissidents to come to Moravia, where they were gathering. Both rich and poor were attracted for varied reasons; debt, poverty, a craving for salvation. Not all were pious and those who were not were weeded out. If a person desired readmittance, he was allowed to re-enter after a suitable period of repentance.

Their legal arrangements consisted of the communal ownership of all property, the right to brew and sell beer, freedom from religious oppression, and the right to leave, including the right to sell their property and take their belongings. If a legal wrangle arose, they managed to talk to the parties involved and avoided going to court.

The Hutterite Brethren had a hierarchy of leaders. First was the bishop and the servant of the Word, followed by the servant of temporal needs. In order to quality for these positions, a person had to have an exemplary character, as did his wife. A high degree of education was not necessary, but it was necessary to be literate, conversant with Hutterite literature, and to know the scriptures. The bishop was elected by God and the congregation.

There was no vote for women and women were prohibited from preaching and teaching. They could not be elected leaders or take part in the choosing of one. They were to be quiet in church. A husband was admonished to discipline his wife, deemed subordinate to man, as he would a child (Clasen, 1972: 207).

When a bishop was chosen he was presented to the gemein. The gemein meant the church, that is, the baptised men. The elected servant of the Word would be on probation for two or three years. In the beginning, there were inequities between the leaders and the people in their food, clothing, and living conditions. The people were governed by a theocracy.

The people gathered together into a gemeinshaft community. This was defined as one arranged by blood, place, mind, kinship, friendship and occupation that produces a consensus of understanding of moral obligations and restraints derived from participation in the society.

Life and work were carefully regulated. The Hutterites demonstrated great organizational ability. Ordinances were written with a strong religious orientation that spelled out in detail the duties of various leaders, the failings that they should avoid, and relations with the outside world. The ordinance for craftsmen told him what kind and quality of article he should make, how work should be organized and where to purchase materials and sell his products. In 1605, regulations were set out regarding the Hutterite's code of dress to eliminate vanity. Meals were eaten in common, with a prayer both before and after each one. An ordinance set out the duties of women; to help with the milking, to supervise the kitchen and laundry, to be a storekeeper; to be cook and assistants, food carriers, bread cutters, and dish washers.

The traditional Hutterite marriage ceremony dates back to 1585 and is based on Ephesians 5:12 to 5:33. Children of a marriage were to be raised in common, away from the parents from approximately the age of three years. There was to be a small school and a great school; instruction would centre on religion. From the time of the first utterances a child would be taught to pray.

The Hutterites had their own cemeteries. They had no church building but used a large room. Services were held twice weekly and the people were urged to wear decent dress. In the seventeenth century, the order of service was codified. First, a hymn was sung, followed by a short sermon related to a Bible passage, then a longer sermon, and finally another hymn. In the seventeenth century these sermons were recorded with special ones for weddings, baptisms, and the confirmation of new leaders. Specific sermons were designated for each Sunday.

Baptism was formalized in the mid-sixteenth century. The applicant had to take instruction and then have a private meeting with the servants to proclaim himself to have a free conscience and to have no allegiance to any girl who was not a Hutterite. With baptism, the believer promised to suffer persecution, to submit to punishment by the colony, to give up all property and, if he should leave, agreed that the community owed him nothing. A pitcher of water was poured over his head and the servant declared, "your faith has saved you." Sinners confessed before the community and were punished by having to serve penance or by expulsion.

Work assignments were given, not chosen. The agrarian life-style suited their cooperative teamwork approach, and morale was usually high. The craftsmen among them were noted for their diverse fine work, although they refused to make weapons of any kind and would make no finery. If a man should work off the colony, all his earnings went to the community. The Hutterites were excellent managers and the communities became affluent.

> Despite disparaging remarks of learned visionaries and social reformers like Sir Thomas More, these uneducated craftsmen were the only group in sixteenth century Europe who successfully established a new type of society based on community of goods (Clasen, 1972: 248).

From the Bible, the sect selected an ideology which expressed its religious sentiments in gemeinshaft terms rather than individualistic ones. They persistently rejected the political and economic relations of church and state. They displayed a 'cultural primitivism' angrily condemning higher education and aesthetic cultural values that they considered an impediment to achieving salvation. Theirs was an intense, genuine piety, and they exhibited extraordinary organizational ability to create an entirely new society. No man was considered superior to another; their religious life was to be expressed in small circles of people; they wished to live the life of discipleship like the

apostles. They were pacifists who emphasized the spiritual dimension of their world in an egalitarian society separate from the rest of the world.

The agitators of the Hutterite Anabaptist movement in the beginning were highly educated individuals who were executed for their beliefs. Leadership fell to a charismatic, brilliant leader named Jakob Hutter. He merged the Tirolean and Morvian groups and the group was formalized with its ideological framework as Hutterites in 1536. The history of the Hutterites is one of persecution and martyrdom from their earliest days. In the great Hutterite Chronicle begun in Moravia, and in hymns, epistles, and tracts still in existence today, the Hutterite's living history was told by their prolific, passionate writers. The Hutterite people have endured and multiplied for over four hundred and fifty years.

Cruelly persecuted for their beliefs wherever they settled, the Hutterites were forced to move from place to place. Living in Russia when Alexander the Second reinstated conscription, they decided to move to the New World. In 1874, approximately eight hundred and twenty strong, the Hutterites settled the Dakota prairies. They established their democratic, Christian communes. They were recognized as good farmers and welcomed to the new land. Conscription, instituted during World War One by the government of the United States, caused Hutterites to move again. They travelled north to Canada, where they settled in the prairie provinces. A few colonies returned to the United States after the war. The Hutterites in Canada, to date, have been free to live their lives in relative peace, to prosper and to multiply.

What is fascinating about reading the history of the origin of the Hutterite people, is to recognize that the tenets that constituted the foundation of of the values and beliefs upon which the sect was founded are still viable today. The Hutterites have devised and perpetuated their society on this framework.

Socialization and Enculturation of the Hutterite People

From their beginning, the Hutterites have stated their beliefs clearly and strongly and have expected strict adherence from their members. A Hutterite views his world and his place in it by the patriarchal and heirarchal social organization of the colony. God is at the top of the Divine Order. He is Lord over man; man is over woman; the parent over the child; the older person over the younger; humans over animals.

The development of education for the very young was an important aspect of maintaining their identity from the very beginning of the movement.

Although it is the families function to produce new souls, the children belong to the colony and potentially to the church. The colony has the major responsibility for the education of the young. Long before Froebel's kindergarten, the Hutterites had devised a systematic and formalized training for the young child.[1] The main goal of this education was to turn the child in the way of God.

> Training is consistent and continuous in all age groups. From early childhood to adulthood, there is no relaxation of indoctrination within clearly defined age and sex groupings. The goals of each stage in the social hierarchy are attainable by virtually all Hutterites. Individuals are well trained not to assert themselves and each person is rewarded by important work and by the awareness that his contribution is needed (Hostetler, 1874:289).

The socialization process described by Hostetler was practised on the Athabasca colony, and much of it became known to me in the years that I worked there. For example, following the birth of a child, a mother is excused from her duties for six weeks. While she tends to the infant, her mother or sisters assists her for four weeks. The healthy baby soon adjusts to his mother's work routine and will sleep when she is busy. Sometimes the mother's work schedule may be adjusted if the baby is not strong or is ill, so that she may stay with the infant. As soon as solid foods are consumed by the child, the infant's hands are folded into a position of prayer while the mother says the prayer. The parents also say a prayer for the child before laying it down to sleep. On a visit to the town library, a girl of approximately eighteen months had her palms placed together by her mother as her mother said grace before they ate their snack. Not only was she teaching her small child to pray, but she was also setting an example for the other colony children. Coddled and loved by everyone on the colony, by kindergarten age the child will respond to all colony members.[2]

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1 The concept of kindergarten was well established by the Hutterites long before the wider European society began to realize the benefits of early education for children with the advent of Froebel and Montessori et al., near the turn of the twentieth century.

2 In contrast, one of the young girls who was minding a toddler sister was highly amused when the child would cringe and cry whenever she carried the child close to me. On another occasion, at a performance in town when I was seated with all the school children and the German teacher, this same toddler attempted to crawl on my lap. Immediately her father, the German teacher, snatched her away.

At the Athabasca colony, grandmothers and aunties helped to look after the infants when the mother returned to work. Children from the ages of three up to five attended the kindergarten. This was held in an older trailer, set up in an unadorned, fenced yard. When I commented on the dirth of toys in the yard, I was told that the children had to learn to play with each other. Two elderly women took turns, on alternate days, to feed the children, give them naps, and socialize them to play cooperatively with their peers. The boys and girls are expected to become quieter and more obedient in the kindergarten. They are taught simple songs and verses in German and learn to adapt to a limited environment. Often, the elderly preacher could be seen sitting with the children, guiding their play. Any serious disobedience brings a scolding, a threat, and if deemed necessary a strap. The major role of the kindergarten is to wean the child from the family and teach him to respect the authority of the colony in addition to that of his parents and babysitters. The Hutterite child is learning to identify himself as part of a group and to have unquestioning obedience to that group.

On the Athabasca colony, after kindergarten was over in the middle of the afternoon, the small children were often placed in a screen enclosed sandbox to play. The sandbox had a roof and a little door that latched on the outside. Here the child could play alone or with another, in safety. After school young girls, some a mere seven years of age, would watch over their younger siblings. I was impressed with how responsible and caring they were. One boy cared for his younger male cousins.

On his sixth birthday a child begins German school for one hour each weekday, prior to English school, and on Saturdays. In German school the children learn to read and write German script, study the Bible, memorize verses and hymns and study their own history. Boys attend until they are fifteen years of age but girls stop attending at age fourteen. Sometimes the eldest boy would take the German teacher's place if he were busy.

Appointed by the colony council, the German teacher's duties are "...to be performed faithfully, with diligence, to care for the children as if they were your own", as first set out in Hutterite School Discipline in 1568 (Peters, 1967). The German teacher teaches German school, supervises the children at meals, and organizes the children to help with work when it is necessary. He daily ascertains that the children are obedient in English school and his permission must be sought if any child wishes to be absent from schooling. His wife, the German school mother, assists him in the dining hall to teach the children manners and see that they are quiet during meals. She also instructs the girls in the pattern of work rotation that will be part of their colony work for the remainder of their lives.

English school spans the same time period in the child's life as does German school. Basic numeracy and literacy learned in English school are necessary to do business in the world, but the status of the teacher who does not teach sacred matters is low. Despite the natural curiosity of the children, there is an absence of a natural impulse to learn if it requires work. Only a few gifted individuals are creative.

The provincial course of studies is followed unless there is a clash of values. While my original expectations were to teach what the Alberta curriculum prescribed, the Hutterites did place many restrictions on the program. For example, their culture does not use musical instruments, and they requested that the rhythm instruments be removed from the school. Perhaps because music, like language, exemplifies a culture, children refused to sing in music class. Soon there was no music class.[3] In addition, the phonograph and records used in the classroom were removed by request.

The colony members recognized that physical exercise is needed for health, but physical activity is supposed to come from work. This attitude affected the school physical education program. Indoor activities in the cold of winter were curtailed. Sometimes, when playing a game outside, there was not much effort expended and there would be lack of any apparent will to try. This seemed to take all of the fun out of games. The children also did not like competitive games, where only one could be the best. The elementary school principal in town encouraged us to try the Canadian Fitness tests. Something new was usually embraced with keen interest, but these were approached with apathy and awkwardness; we did not complete them.

Science that could be understood concretely was all right in the curriculum, but social studies seemed to a great extent irrelevant to the children's lives. I tried to find meaningful activities for them in these and other areas of study. For example, in health, safety and nutrition were emphasized. But the Hutterites' attitudes towards the school subjects, arising from their values, was often not explicit. Sometimes the children seemed ambivalent, with some willing to participate whereas others would not. This was one of many areas of uncertainty which affected the relation between the English teacher and the children.

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3 A contradiction arose when one of the girls was going to get married. Then the children wanted to learn songs to sing on this occasion. Many of the songs they wanted to learn were older ones that their parents knew; a retired teacher was able to provide some words. However, when the wedding was over the desire to sing disappeared.

The relationship of the children to the teacher goes through a cycle of closeness and indifference. This keeps the teacher in her place. The lesson was reinforced to me many times. For example, periodically the children would ignore me during informal times such as recess and the noon hour, apparently to assert their separateness and difference. A grade one girl once spoke to me derisively about "those English", apparently oblivious to the fact I fit the category. Affection would be removed when the cycle was in the indifference phase, but respect would remain. Relations would gradually reestablish themselves, and then the cycle would repeat.

Children begin school speaking only low German, the everyday language of the colony. As language and thought are inseparable (Freire, 1974), the Hutterian world view is expressed through, and conditioned by, their use of the German language. More important than literacy is the oral sharing of words and phrases in church, at meals, and throughout the day, that lend strong support to the uniformity of thought patterns and communal values. Everyone memorizes the same prayer, the same hymns, and the same vows. Through dialogue, their history of suffering and witness is kept alive.

Visitors from another Dariusleut colony were virtually indistinguishable from the usual inhabitants of the Athabasca Colony.[4] They wore similar clothing and their mannerisms were similar. They walked the same, they talked the same. The reproduction of their culture appeared as one with that of the Athabasca colony. The uniformity was striking.

The older children help the younger in a firm yet kindly manner. Teasing among adults and children is common and can be used to indicate approval or punishment (as when it is used to shame the recipient). Disobedience in German school is immediately punished by scolding or shaming (e.g. kneeling, or the strap). In school, the children sit ordered by age and gender. They maintain the same seats in church. When church or school or meals are dismissed, the men and boys, from the oldest, leave first. Then the women and girls leave in the same age order. In the adults' and children's dining halls, separate seating arrangements by gender and ordered by age are the rule. At meal times, it is the oldest male present who says the grace both before and after the meal. Through these daily rituals the authority of the male over the female is demonstrated and reinforced as the woman learns acceptance of her submissive role.

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4 The colonies are divided into three leuts (meaning people), the Schmidleut, the Lehrleut, and the Dariusleut, depending on their founder. While some customs are different, the basic beliefs and practises are the same. Colonies tend to network and intermarry within the same leut. The Athabasca Colony belongs to the Dariusleut.

On the child's fifteenth birthday, attendance at school immediately ceases. Symbolizing the new status of the boy or girl is the privilege of eating with the adults. The change in status demands acceptance of sex roles. Boys are assigned to an apprenticeship to begin to learn the intricacies of the many adult male jobs. Older colony women teach girls what their work will be. Sometimes, working in peer groups, work and social life mingle. A few young girls from Pibroch colony came to help when the women were butchering geese on the Athabasca colony. Their visit meant singing and having fun as well as work and they were very welcome.

According to John Hostetler (1974:223), the later teen years are called the casual years. I also heard them called the foolish years. It is during these years, in his or her daily living, that the young person must weigh the satisfaction of being a Hutterite. At about the age of twenty, when deemed emotionally and intellectually mature and having been rigourously indoctrinated by the colony, a youth is expected to voluntarily accept the teachings of the Hutterites and accept baptism. The request signifies submission to the spiritual community and acceptance of adult responsibility. The individual will devote the rest of his life to the colony and its members. The goals of socialization are two, preparation for adult life and initiation into baptism, and preparation for life after death and initiation into eternal life.

Baptism is a necessary preliminary step before marriage. Commitment to God precedes commitment to a spouse. After baptism, men receive voting privileges and a more responsible work assignment. A woman's work status does not change with baptism. Women do not vote in colony matters, although they certainly do voice their opinion about matters that affect them.

Young people are free to choose whom they will marry. After marriage, the girl moves to the boy's colony, leaving behind all that is familiar. She must adjust to any slight differences and accept her mother-in-law's direction. This adjustment is made easier if the sisters of the bride are allowed to help her set up household, as happened when a girl from Athabasca colony was married. If sisters marry brothers, the pain of separation is mitigated. Two sets of sisters were married to brothers in the Athabasca colony.

A married woman is allowed three weeks of vacation every year, to visit her home colony and maintain ties there. Large families are the rule rather than the exception, although the birth rate has decreased in recent years. Marital discord is brought to the colony preacher and God for guidance, and divorce is not accepted.

One reality that the Hutterite people live with is that they are never free of their carnal nature. Because the community is the will of God, a person's adherence to the rules of the church community on a daily basis, as is submitting his or her will to the will of the community. Each member watches over his fellows. He admonishes anyone who commits a fault. Self-esteem depends on complete acceptance by the community and social control is achieved mainly through the individual's fear of rejection (i.e. shunning) by the other members of the community.

3. THE ENGLISH TEACHER ON THE HUTTERITE COLONY

The Beginning

When I was offered the position of teaching school at our local Hutterite Colony, I must confess that it was with much trepidation that I accepted it. I knew nothing about the people or about the Colony. I had been there only once with a neighbor, to buy a couple of live geese. We had provided much merriment for the Hutterite women as we tried unsuccessfully to catch the honking, huge birds. They did it so effortlessly, holding the goose so that she was incapable of mischief. When we put the geese, loose, into the back seat of the car on the floor, the Hutterites watched with broad smiles. They no doubt knew what kind of mess and odour would come from that!

The superintendent of schools was an acquaintance of mine from sharing community work, and he intimated to me that I need not stay at the Colony more than a year, only until another position in the town school became available. This reinforced in me the idea that the Colony was the least desirable school to teach in, in our County school system. The teacher there had no readily available colleagues with whom to reflect upon the happenings of the day, to problem solve, or to plan. Resources for teaching were limited. The culture of the people was unknown.

The superintendent suggested that I might want to drive out to meet the German teacher before school began. I called ahead. When I drove into the colony yard, two men dressed all in black came over to the car. I stopped and rolled down the window and introduced myself. They asked what I wanted. I responded by asking if there was anything that I should know about teaching on the colony before I started. The reply was brief, and I was not even invited to get out of the car to see the school. I drove away to await the first day of school with mixed feelings, not reassured one whit.

This was to be my first official teaching position. As a "late bloomer", I had received my degree in education in 1980, the year that I had become fifty. My major had been in early childhood education and prior to completing my degree, I had taught kindergarten for seven years and helped nurture our community's program through its initial stages of the Alberta Government's Early Childhood Program. The philosophy of education that I was taught was child centred. I was to discover that the philosophy of education that the Hutterites hold, is

diametrically opposite, an authoritarian one. This was to become a source of much conflict. As I would have done in any other county school, I also planned to follow the Alberta elementary curriculum guide in the colony school. Because all of this curriculum is not appropriate, this too became a source of contention.

The Athabasca Colony or Whispering Hills Colony, as they call themselves, was established by the Rosebud Colony at Rockyford, Alberta. When it becomes timely to establish a new or daughter colony, because of increasing population size usually, a suitable location is sought out, often in close proximity.[1] The senior colony had suffered drought, grasshoppers, prairie fires, hail etc. and hearing of this land through a Calgary realtor had purchased it for a new colony, in a different area of the province.

Life for those hardy members chosen to start the new colony was fraught with difficulty. Six families with the surnames of Gross and Stahl came north, the men working in the sawmills in the winters, from 1961 - 1974, and the families living in old substandard houses until they could begin to build their own. Needs for the farming operation had to be met first and it wasn't until 1977 that modern bathrooms were installed in the first homes built. Combining of grain crops in the first years was done with combines trucked up from Rosebud and then returned. Schooling for the children took place at Lahaieville School, a neighboring one room school, until the colony was able to build its own school. Eli Gross, the Colony minister, is quoted in the dedication of the history book of this area:

> In the beginning there were trees and bush; in the developing, there was labour; in the sharing, there is joy - a celebration of remembrance(Eight Horizons Historical Society, 1980).

One thing that the Hutterite Brethren and I had in common was that we had both come to Athabasca County to farm, beginning under difficult conditions about the same time. While the Hutterites were busy establishing their farming operations, our family, too, had moved to the Athabasca area in 1967, and had bought an old abandoned farm. When our paths crossed, the Hutterites and I had many stories of hardships

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[1] The closeness of colonies to each other was perceived to be a problem for other farmers as recently as January, 1990, when a Unifarm convention again raised the issue of the impact on a community of the self sufficiency of the Brethren and their huge land holdings

that we could share. They also were free with farming advice that they had learned through experience. The advice was not always of use to us, but the generous spirit in which it was offered was always appreciated. Our farm is seventeen miles from the colony and it would take twenty - five minutes driving time in optimal weather conditions, up to however long was warranted by the snow or ice or mud, to get there. No matter the weather, the students at the colony could always be at school!

The School

The school appeared like something out of "Little House On the Prairie". It had a wall of small paned windows facing to the morning sun. Concrete steps led up to the entry door of the porch on the north. The small building was painted white with a blue roof, as were the neighboring row houses. Blue was also the color of all the trucks of various sizes.[2] There was no playground. Only a lonely teeter-totter in disrepair was beside the school. Behind the school and to the south was an immense garden. The homes started close by and ran north and south, all the way to the other end of the quadrant. There a long building, which I later learned was the kitchen, stood facing the school.

When I first entered the school, I found that the porch led into a little anteroom, which contained a sink and a toilet on each side, one for the girls and one for the boys. Jackets were hung in this little room. The furnace took up a large corner here also, and a door led to the school room proper. Books and supplies were stored on top of the bathroom area as it had a low ceiling. To get these supplies was not convenient. It meant climbing onto the top of the sink cupboard to reach them and sometimes even having to get right up there. Of course, the student's could get up with no difficulty. I was to discover that the principle of a communal life, based on sharing, applied to school supplies. Sometimes it was even the adults who needed a special type of tape or kraft paper to trace a pattern. If they asked, I always gave it to them. but when supplies that were needed for school disappeared this issue became contentious.

The school room was also the people's church. There were four rows of hardwood glossy benches at the back, on each side of the middle aisle. In front of these were the student's desks. Larger desks were at the back of each row, and the smaller ones in front. Boys sat on the east

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2 I later asked one of the older boys if the color blue had any significance for the Hutterite people, only to be answered with a smile, and no explanation. I still wonder.

side of the school and the girls on the west. The beginning students were in the front and the eldest at the back. Year by year, a student would move to a bigger desk until at age fifteen, on the birth date, the student would move out of the English school forever.

In the middle, at the front of the school room, sat a shiny, oak desk that I was told was the German teacher's desk. Another bench, that was for the elders, was behind this desk, to the right of the minister and faced into the room. Also at the front, in a corner, was an old, brown desk facing the wall, with a filing cabinet beside it. This was to be my desk. Although at first I tried to turn the desk so that it would face out into the room, the next day I would always find it back in its corner until I gave up and left it, using it mostly for a place to put my things, and for marking at the end of the day.

One small, mobile blackboard was at the window side of the room and the front wall of the room was a blackboard. There was some open shelving and a couple of cupboards with doors. Three small tack boards were placed on the side and back walls. The plain tiles on the floor gleamed and the whole effect was of austere cleanliness and simpleness.

There were ten students that first year and a boy in kindergarten. The students ranged from grade two to six, according to records. I had trouble at first distinguishing some of the girls from each other. Partly it was the manner of dressing, the head "shawls" and the long, sober colored jackets and skirts and aprons. Later I learned that two of their mothers were sisters and their fathers were brothers. There were two separate instances of this which would account for some of the close resemblances. The boys came to school in black pants and a bright plaid shirt that their mothers had made. The mothers made all the clothes for the family. I was informed that the child of kindergarten age would attend school daily. This was different from the attendance policy in town, and I wondered why it should be different here. The biggest advantage would be to have the child learn some English. I relied on what the children and their parents told me. Mostly it was the students who informed me of what had occurred in the past. Evidently from the way that they spoke, there had been a lot of ill will between the children, the parents and the previous teacher.

I was invited to eat dinner with the people daily, which I accepted. This gave me daily contact with the adults as we walked back and forth to the kitchen. I sat at one end of the womens' table with the head cook and the grandmother of all the Gross children. As in the

school, the men sat at tables on the east, the women on the west, in order of age. It was the eldest man present who gave the blessing both before and after the meal. The youths, when they were fifteen, were allowed to eat with the adults, one of the rites of passage from childhood to adulthood. The children had their own dining room and were supervised by the German teacher and his wife. Meals were brief as talking was tacitly forbidden.

The County-School Relationship

The superintendent of schools was of Mennonite descent and of German parentage. He did not know much about the Hutterite people, but was very accepting of the idea that they had a right to educate their children as they deemed fit. He visited occasionally and was desirous of a constructive relationship with the people. Rather than try to coerce the Colony to adapt educational practices that town schools advocated, when the colony later wanted all audiovisual equipment removed from the school, he was willing to comply with their wishes. When they wanted no more music instruction, when they asked that the swimming program stop, their requests were granted without question.

At what was to become our annual year end party at Baptiste Lake,(on a private piece of land belonging to the Anglican church) the superintendent and his wife and two children would come and share our picnic, taking all the Hutterite children, in turn, for a ride in his motor boat. He was very supportive of my dual role of teacher and principal at the Colony school. To be principal meant filling out required governmental forms, and I was asked to attend the monthly meetings of the principals of other county schools and the superintendent. Their agenda usually wasn't pertinent to my situation, but I was kept informed of county educational affairs.

The colony school's budget had been doubled to one thousand dollars when I began teaching there. The superintendent gave me a free hand to spend the money where I thought it would most benefit the educational program. Some of the funds were spent on a slide and a climbing apparatus during the first two years, and the county maintenance shop built new teeter totters and a frame that held four swings to provide a playground to the west of the school. All of the children on the Colony benefitted from and enjoyed this playground. The foreman of the maintenance crew was sympathetic to the Hutterite community and when something needed repair, he gave us good and generous service. Like the superintendent, he was treated with consideration and respect by the Colony.

While the County paid the teacher's salary and provided a budget to operate the school, the Colony remitted to the County one half of the teacher's salary and was responsible for the school building and its maintenance.[3] To have their own school for their own children was an expensive proposition for the Hutterites, but in their eyes, it is absolutely essential to have their own school for the continuity of their religious community. Often people outside the colony argue that it would make good economic sense to have the Hutterite children go to town schools. They would get a "better" education, as they followed the recommended Alberta curriculum closer, and would learn to get along with us. Shouldn't all children have the right to an "open future"?

This interesting question is addressed in a philosophical essay by Joel Feinberg(1980).4 Amish communities in Kansas wished to exempt their children from attending state accredited schools. Like the Hutterites and Mennonites, the Amish are Anabaptists. They attempted to live out their strong religious beliefs in every thought, word and deed in their agrarian life style and distrusted the corrupting worldliness of outside society.

> Amish school's teach only enough reading to make a lifetime of Bible study possible, only enough arithmetic to permit the keeping of budget books...Four or five years of this, plus exercises in sociality, devotional instruction, inculcation of traditional virtues, and on the job training in simple crafts, shop, kitchen are all that is required, in a formal way to prepare children for an Amish way of life to which the parents are bound by a most solemn commitments (Feinberg, 1980:131).

The Kansas courts refused the Amish the right to educate their children in their own schools on the grounds that this limited education would limit the future rights of the children to live the kind of self fullfilling life the child might choose for him or herself, including the "opportunity to make an intelligible choice between the Amish way of life and that of the outside world." However, the Supreme Court of the United States overturned this ruling on the grounds that to not have their own schools would probably be critical for the very survival of the Amish sect. For the Hutterites, who have a similar philosophy, it is just as critical for their survival to have their own schools.

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[3] The agreement between the colony and the county has been rewritten since this time.

Starting to Teach

Before school began, I had read John Hostetler's book, *Hutterite Society* (1974). It gave me some background information. The preacher, early in the year, gave me a book that he told me cost seven dollars, *History of the Hutterite Mennonites, 1874 - 1974* (1974). I bought it and found the Hutterite people's own account of their trials and tribulations associated with coming to America, filled with references to God and the Bible, a tribute to their beliefs and determination.

Many local people were glad to tell me hearsay stories, or their own experiences with the Hutterites. Often these seemed to be flavored with the teller's own ethnocentric point of view. I took these with a grain of salt.

Once school began it was soon apparent that the students had much difficulty with academic work, but to the extent that I called the superintendent for aid, we started the year enthralled with each other. From the first day of school, I was charmed by the children and took a keen interest in them. As I began to try to organize a program of studies to fit the students in this new environment that I was in , they began to instruct me on what it was to be a Hutterite. Two things eventually became abundantly clear. Their way of living was totally foreign to me; I experienced cultural shock. Secondly, no matter how much I might admire them, I could never be a Hutterite. I would always be the other, the outsider. This was not always easy to accept. Not that I consciously wanted to be a Hutterite, but whenever the children and I became close, something would happen to spoil the positive atmosphere, to break asunder our good relationship and remind me, beyond question, that I could never belong. I was kept in my place.

When the first day of school did arrive, the children were dressed neatly and cleanly, sitting quietly in their desks, even before school time. Although they sat so still, excitement shone in their sparkling eyes, and they watched my every move, smiling. My feelings were a reflection of theirs...I wanted to practice the art of teaching to the best of my ability. I did not know the Hutterite people's educational aspirations for their children, but I realized that it would be necessary to come to terms with who these people are and what education they want for their children in order to be an effective teacher on the Colony. As we educate our children according to our values and beliefs, wanting a "good" life for them, so too, must the Hutterite people have

similar wishes for their children. I was to discover that their religious beliefs were the cement that glued together all the many facets of their lives and profoundly influenced how the children were to be educated. I was to discover that to be a teacher on a Hutterite colony could not help but influence the English teacher as, day by day, the Hutterite people in their normal daily transactions and discourse revealed the values that they lived by. It caused me to examine the values that I lived by and to reassess them.

When problems occur in my daily life for which there seems no immediate answer, the practice of carefully observing what is happening, and writing it down, as nonjudgmentally as I am able, allows me to be able later to reflect on the events, and perhaps put them into a context where I can understand them. I have found journal writing to be very valuable. From the observations, I am sometimes able to intuit what the meaning is behind an action or related behaviour, when originally it made no sense. Sometimes the recorded behaviour is part of a pattern that reveals itself over time. Journal writing and anecdotal record keeping I learned to use in an early childhood setting. In this different classroom I resorted to these methods to give me an insight into the academic skills and puzzling behaviours of the children. During my first year at the colony, I kept a journal in a irregular manner, as I felt a need to write and understand. Any perplexing behaviour of the children, other relevant factors, and my resulting feelings were recorded during times of need.

From the observations of that first year, some patterns of behaviour began to stand out that were endemic to these students and this school. I tried to deal with those that were troublesome as I thought I should, as a teacher in the town school might, but without the support that a town teacher would have had from colleagues and the principal. I had cause to examine my own ethnocentric view and realize how difficult it was to be totally accepting of others. How difficult it was to be the other, a minority of one, working and living daily in a foreign culture! To say that I felt at times totally frustrated, that my efforts were futile, would not be exaggerating. To exist as a teacher of English in a colony school, it became crucial for me to understand the Hutterite people and there seemed no easy or direct way to do this except to listen and learn and try to understand, as they would reveal themselves, day by day.

The following is a summary from the journal notes kept that first year. During the year, the core subjects formed the backbone of the

work done in the classroom. Around them, I tried to arrange a variety of useful activities that related to what we were doing, to spark interest and enthusiasm. Because the children lived in their own space, inside the colony, separate from the world, anything new or innovative was of high interest to them.

School that first year began much like you might expect. Materials like pencils, crayons, a pen for the older students, note books, ruler, eraser, scissors were provided by the school for the children and they were particular that everyone had the same quantity and kind. I noted that they lapsed into German frequently, rather than using English. Because the working language on the Colony was German, it was not surprising and I did not make an issue of it. I wrote that "too many need help at once;...the children loved to hear stories; when they ate their snacks of chips and oranges, they were tidy with it today." In the last school term, I had had occasion to substitute there once and all garbage had been thrown on the floor.

The second day I brought rug remnants for a circle time. At 8:52 a.m., all the children were seated on their rugs, in a circle, patiently waiting. One child claimed my carpet to look after. I started a morning routine of calendar, attendance, news. The afternoon was very tiring. I needed materials for social studies and health. We talked about cooperation and helping those at our own level of studies. The next day we worked out some school rules together. Everything seemed idyllic.

I was invited to visit one of the Stahl grandmother's homes. I was impressed with the large, shiny clean, sparsely furnished rooms. Over the bed was an embroidered sampler that read, "This World Is Not Our Home". She explained to me that for the Hutterites, their home will be in heaven. They are only on earth a brief time, to work and to serve God.

Two boys had a fight at recess. The younger cried in the bathroom. I was surprised to see one boy who was thirteen, riding a tricycle at recess. I saw no bicycles.

I was given cucumbers, corn and fresh buns to take home. I hadn't thought about it before, but it is hard to accept things always, and not be able to return the gesture. It made me feel humble. When Christmas came, I bought all the children a gift, primarily because I wanted to, but also it was something that I could do for them. I periodically brought toys like Lego, a large Meccano set, "Tin Tin"

comics, that my family had outgrown. While I had intended them for the younger children, all the boys used them. Even the fathers became fond of "Tin Tin" to read.

Despite encouraging the children to talk out their differences, aggression seemed to be the accepted mode of problem solving. An older girl bashed one boy's head into a steel bar at recess. She showed no remorse. His older brother said, "If he deserves it...." The eldest boy concurred. The kindergarten boy was hit by an older boy. He howled, but no one comforted him. When he was finished crying, he rejoined us. Older siblings would box the side of an offender's head to try to get obedience.

One boy explained the naming. Using my own family for example, the eldest son in the family would have the same name as his father and be called Kenneth. Keith, our second son, would be called Keith Kenneth. Our third son would be called Stuart Kenneth. All boys have their father's name second, except for the eldest. The girl's take their mother's name as their second name. This wasn't true in all cases of the children's names, I perceived. The women, when they married, took their husband's name as their second name. This tradition of naming distinguished the three women with the same first name on the colony by the use of their husband's name as their second name. This nomenclature was used on envelopes, for return addresses, I noted.

The children liked to cook. I brought a toaster and they made cinnamon toast. A big hit! Some of them wanted cook books to read, a good way to practice reading and some measuring. There seemed to be no prohibitions about eating any kinds of foods. The foods served at dinner were ample, mostly home grown and plain, with a German ethnic emphasis. My grandmother had been from Germany and had cooked a great many of the same dishes.

All of our pencils disappeared. No one knew a thing. With supplies stored in the back room, they were accessible to all. This became such a problem that I eventually kept supplies not immediately needed stored at my home.

The children enjoyed painting, but it was a chore to keep the paint confined. The girls were expected to clean up. Traditionally, this was not man's work but the boys did not refuse outright. They didn't argue. They just did not do it and usually their sisters would do it for them.

The two oldest boys worked at picking potatoes for a day. One had already missed a day to drive tractor. This made me feel uneasy. What was this saying about the importance of schooling? Two older girls had a real hair pulling, kicking, scratching fight. Neither could be persuaded to quit. Everyone seemed to accept this kind of justice.

When the student cooks passed around their delicious carrot cake, pieces had to be cut exactly even for all. Library books brought from the school were devoured as eagerly as the cake. The adults read some of them, too, instructing their child which to bring.

One mother invited me into her home for coffee at noon. I was always pleased to be asked for coffee, but I never went to anyone's home unless I was invited. She seemed to be the colony's emissary where I was concerned, often informing me casually of things that I should know, or testing my opinion. She told me how important education was, although it was hard for the children because of their German language background.

One of the fathers walked with me to the kitchen telling me poignantly of his son who drowned, and who would have been six soon, if he had lived. Later, his seven year old daughter told me more about this boy who had died. It seemed to me that the memory of the dead was kept very much alive with the people. In all, two boys on the colony had drowned, one in the creek and one in the lagoon. The mothers expressed appreciation that now the children would be in school and they wouldn't have to worry about them. One mother told me that her daughter didn't like to stay home and had always to be searched out at bedtime. I wondered about the relationship of the parents to the children. Were they responsible for the safety and whereabouts of their children, as were parents in general society? I had heard the Colony called a Christian commune. How would that affect social arrangements differently?

One day, in art, an oldest boy took charge and all the children obeyed him. I was impressed at his control. When we ate the second half of the carrot cake, he said that we should say grace, and so he did, in German, after we finished, saying that he did not know the prayer in English. One girl missed a day to babysit while ducks were slaughtered. Next day, both she and a boy were away, needed in the work force. The rest of the class were not so motivated to work when some were away helping.

Arranging it so that no one else was using the pool when we were, we went swimming in the town pool. The children loved it. They did not know how to swim but were obviously learning new skills each time we went. It seemed a valuable ability for the children to have because they lived by water; the creek, the lake and the lagoon and dugout, not to mention the accidents that had happened. As an adjunct to our trip to town to swim, we visited the R.C.M.P. Another swim day, we had a tour of the United Church. The children compared the church to theirs. One of the older boys stated, "It must take guts to speak in front of two hundred people!"

By the end of the first month, some of the girls were beginning to lag in their academic work. One girl told me that two of the oldest students had a teacher's marking book for their reading exercises. Cheating, but they did not seem too concerned. I took the book away.

During these early months, it had become apparent that strict adherence to the Alberta curriculum was not going to be possible because of the unsuitability of the material for these children in the colony's eyes, or because of the degree of difficulty of the material for the children. The letter writing had been part of a language experience program that I was using in conjunction with some readers and workbooks that other county schools used. With such varied grades and ability levels, to incorporate more language experience into the curriculum became onerous.

The superintendent informed me that the Lethbridge school division had modified the grades 4, 5 and 6 social studies and science curriculum for Hutterite schools. He promised to get me a copy and in time, he did.

We had a field trip in the autumn, to the Alberta Game Farm by school bus, with an older girl and the grandmother along. It was the children's first visit to a zoo and everyone enjoyed the trip and the variety of animals.

When the old hens were killed, instead of taking the students out of school to babysit, to my surprise two small children were brought to the school to be looked after. The school was in an uproar as the students played with the youngsters and teased them. Shortly after, a visitor from another colony at Washington, was in school all day. He came occasionally for two weeks. This was a regular occurrence

whenever there was a student visiting from another colony. Often these extra students were a welcome addition as they had interesting stories to tell from home. Occasionally they were disruptive and I would ask them to leave.

Twice when tours of students from other areas visited, and the minister showed them the school, the three oldest students ducked out. One sat in the toilet while the other two ran out the side door. I was flabbergasted. They explained later that they did not want to be on display or made fun of or to have their photograph taken. These feelings were not easy to dispel. The preacher was always most courteous as he showed any group that cared to arrange a trip, around the whole colony. If they asked, he would try to explain how the people lived. Some groups seemed overcome by the strangeness of it all. Some asked ignorant questions like,"Do the children eat candy?" Many seemed to presume that the children on the colony would always be exceptionally well behaved. I was asked if I was a Hutterite. Occasionally, a group of children from another area, after their tour, would stop to play games with us and to have fun. The visitors ranged from retired folk to young elementary students and all ages in between. I seldom was informed that they were coming, but the children knew.

An older girl had been taking a lot of harassing from the second oldest boy, to the point where she had been in tears. When we talked about learning from our elders, the other children all claimed that her father drank, swore and lied against two of the other fathers... the sins of the fathers are given to the children?

We had been writing to the children at another colony. The children looked forward to receiving the letters very much. When mail came to the colony for the school, it was always opened before I received it. It would be waiting for me at the kitchen at noon. The children told me that the preacher did it.

The third trip to the swimming pool was to be our last. The minister or preacher as he was referred to by the colony people, said to me as I walked back from dinner,"Are you still swimming? It will have to stop." I began to try to discuss the matter, only to see that it was not negotiable. Reluctantly, I had to accept his decision. The children informed me that their correspondents at the other colony had told about our swimming, causing the minister to be chastised for allowing it. It seemed that the ministers met occasionally and these things were discussed. This also put a stop to our correspondence.

During the third month, my relationship with many of the children had become more distant and aloof. Communication was not forthright and helpful any more. There were more misdemeanors. The children were disobedient. I did not know why. Learning was often interrupted as I attempted to restore order. I sometimes felt that the misbehaviour was orchestrated or had a cause, but I did not know.

The Christmas concert that the children and I put on was the first one that I had been involved in preparing. The children enjoyed their gifts that Santa, an old friend of the preacher and his wife, gave and I provided. We had decorated a real tree the day before the concert and excitement had run high for weeks. When I introduced all the adults by name to my son and was right, one of them said,"How do you know?" No one had told me who they all were, but I had observed and found out. I was told that the Hutterites did not exchange gifts themselves, but all the families had given me a little gift. Their kindness was touching. A gift from the colony as a whole was a goose for our family's Christmas dinner.

After the holiday, in January, I was asked by the grandmother at dinner to remove the rhythm instruments. They did not want them in the school. I took them to the town school.

I had invited a professional performer, a clown, Al Simmons, to come to our school and perform because I knew that the children would not be allowed to attend a school performance in town. He agreed, to my delight. He was hilarious, and he and the children and the adults who came, too, had a wonderful time. Later, though, I was reproved for bringing him to the colony. Many times I was to feel that I walked a narrow line, not always understanding the limits, feeling that standards were sometimes shifting under my feet.

In March, a deaf mute cousin, six years old, came and visited our school for two weeks. Her two year old brother was also deaf. She had had excellent tutoring and was superior in her ability to read English, compared to the grade two students here. She used sign language and was learning lip reading. She was comfortable with me and the children and was to visit annually, a visit that we all looked forward to. The students learned some sign language and I bought a book on the subject to help. Her deafness, and her brother's, was caused by a genetic disease. Another of the elderly women had told me of losing three of her infants, all from one disease that was also of genetic origin. To

reduce the likelihood of this happening, careful birth and marriage records are kept. Scientists find this closed society a useful source to study these aberrant diseases and Hutterites cooperate fully in these studies because they realize the importance of them to their generativity.

By May, solutions to the difficult teaching situation that I felt ensnared in were no clearer to me. Although the superintendent was told by the minister that we could play baseball, and I bought equipment, the women told me that we were too noisy, we woke up the baby, we damaged the garden....an older boy asked me why I had bought new equipment when old would do. During a science experiment, water had leaked through a crack in the top of the German teacher's desk and had spoiled a beautiful handwritten, small black book. He met me at the door with the evidence. I felt very badly. The same older boy said that the children should not exit the school at recess by the side door, the most convenient exit to get to the playground. I was incredulous. This was ridiculous. He threatened to nail the door shut. I still allowed its use and the next day, he had nailed it shut with a two by four. The action was so ludicrous that I felt like laughing. The German teacher, to whom I would have complained, was away and so it stayed nailed shut for a week until for some reason unknown to me, he took the board off.

By the end of May, I had reluctantly taken out the strap once to maintain an uneasy order. One of the boys had been walking on the desk tops. I knew that the strap was used on the colony. I had heard it called euphemistically the children's "friend". A girl had one day showed me her red hands and told me to feel how warm they were. The minister had told me to use it. I did not know how to use it. Neither did I believe in its use as our five sons had been raised into responsible adults without it.

This day, the ill behaviour of the children seemed to reach a climax. At recess, all the children except for two boys, ran down to the pig barn and didn't return for half an hour. The milk man, who lived nearby asked, "Are they being bad?" "Yes", I responded. His wife just said to not worry, that the children would return. He advised me to use the strap.

It had become difficult to make myself come to school. No matter what I did, I could not see how to resolve the problems in the classroom effectively. Without the cooperation of the children and their goodwill, there was no positive climate to foster learning. I had examined my

actions. If some of the lessons conducted were not acceptable to the Hutterite people, how was I to know? It was always after the fact that I found out and never directly. I wasn't sure that the lessons were the problem, anyway. Although the superintendent was supportive and I had let him read my journal, he was able to offer no concrete help. In fact, he told me that I was the best teacher that the colony ever had. They had told him so. They had also brought their monies owing to the county up to date. They had told the same thing to the principal of the town school where I attended staff meetings, and to various people in town, whom they knew would tell me. How could I reconcile these words with the disobedience in the classroom? Contradictions... The behaviour of the children was also riddled with contradictions because some of the good will and affection developed between us, was still evident much of the time. The adults, while they could be aloof, sometimes not acknowledging me for reasons unknown, consistently gave me little gifts of food and other things. I had even offered to pay once. The head cook had laughed. "Take it," she encouraged me.

The end of the school term was approaching. I wrote a letter of resignation to the superintendent and took it to him at his office. By accident or design, he wasn't there. I had time to reflect on the decision.

The German teacher was responsible for the children at school, but I had early observed that he was harsh with them and that they were afraid of him. I did appeal to him for help when the school supplies went missing, but did not receive any real aid. He was always at school ending the hour of German lessons that preceded English school when I arrived, and we exchanged a few amiable words every day.

From the beginning, I had wanted to be able to manage the classroom myself, in a cooperative manner, without having to rely on another authority. To have to continually have someone else referee the problems and deal with them in a physically punitive manner was abhorrent to me. I felt that to give the problems to someone else's authority might erode mine. Trust, respect, firm limits...there would be problems but these I had hoped could be solved. What I didn't understand was the paternalistic authority pattern on the colony and that obedience to God was its foundation. Obedience to the preacher, to the community, to their father; obedience to the English teacher was way down the list, if it was there at all.

At the beginning of June, two of the parents, the second minister and his wife, came to the school in the afternoon. In the back room, with the door shut, they questioned me about the behaviour of the children. The wife suggested that her husband could spank them all. They were all his brother's children. The fathers would not mind. The husband suggested that alternatively, the children could apologize to me and promise to never misbehave again. "Not realistic," I replied. " The German teacher could punish the children, but he is too severe," the husband related. The husband kept coming back to the parents of the children. It was their responsibility to see that their children behaved. He explained that the previous teacher had lost all control and would sit on the German teacher's desk and scream at the children. Of course, the children paid no attention. They were used to her...and tired of her.

I asked, "How can you change the children's attitude if they believe that they can do as they will?" The one boy who had caused me to take out the strap was mentioned. His mother had told me he was "hyperactive". These people called him spoiled. They told me that his dad had tried to spank his older brother but couldn't as he was too strong. "Order obtained by punishment, how long will it last?" the second preacher asked. We concluded by agreeing that the behaviour of the children was really the parent's responsibility.

I thanked them sincerely for coming and he replied smiling,"You're welcome". It was a relief to have discussed these problems openly. Would any support be forthcoming?

In the next days, the tension in the classroom slowly eased. We planned for our year end picnic at the lake. I was given a day to go and visit the Plain Lakes Colony School at Two Hills by the superintendent. There was some exchange of visiting between this colony and the Athabasca Colony. The teacher there was pleased to have company and someone to talk to who was familiar with a Hutterite colony. As I observed in their larger school and toured the colony with them, I recognized many similarities both in the structure of the colony and the children's behaviour. One large, nine year old boy held my hand all the time we were walking, and I felt a girl curiously rubbing the rough wool fabric of my jacket. The school house was a separate building, off by itself, used only for school. It held a small library. The older girls gave advice to younger students needing help. The children did not get out of their desks. Even grade one boys, unable to proceed without help, sat quietly watching and waiting. The teacher warned me that I should have a lock on my gas cap to prevent the children at home from

putting sugar in my gas tank. I felt amused but thought," All is not roses here, either. Do we deserve to be treated like this because we are from the outside?" I wasn't ready to accept this notion.

When one of the older girls asked me just before Farmer's Day in June, if I was going to stay and I said, "Yes," she smiled. "I'm glad!" Having decided to stay, I was glad, too. There would be problems. I was the outsider but I was beginning to get a glimmer of what it meant to be a Hutterite. I knew some of the problems that I would have to face, disobedience and misbehaviour in class, visitors from other colonies, unknown implicit rules, absences due to work, lack of motivation, missing materials and inadequate resources. These problems would not disappear, but next year with some insight, and the support of the parents, things could only get better. During the second year, I kept my journal more faithfully. While there were some improvements, many of the same problems persisted.

Teaching at the colony school had its moments of wonder and closeness when the children and I would be striving and achieving together. Sometimes these were moving and humbling, happy moments, like our visit to the Provincial Museum in Edmonton. From the vaults for us to see, were carefully unpacked clothing and items from this colony's ancestors. The preacher, and the second preacher, Grandma and an elderly spinster accompanied the children and me. A curator at the museum, David Goa, had contact with the elderly woman from whom he obtained items for the museum. I had met him when he had visited the school. At that time he had told me if ever we wished to visit the museum, to call him, and I did. The next day after our visit, one of the children brought me a poem written by this elderly woman because she was so moved by this experience. She later told me that she had never felt like that before. Her poem, written on a scrap of paper, I sent to David Goa when I sent him a personal thank you.

That same day, in the afternoon, we had met Madame Sauvé, the Governor General of Canada, on the grounds of the parliament buildings in Edmonton where she was holding a garden party for invited school children from northern Alberta. We were not really invited because when applying, we had wanted to bring all the children. Some of them were too young. Dr. Goa said to go anyway, that he would phone ahead. Whatever was arranged, we were warmly welcomed. The preacher got to shake her hand and speak with her. The children got to eat all the hot dogs and ice cream that they desired. We were satiated! We could not wish for more good things to happen.

The school children from Pibroch Colony and their teachers were also there. The children were acquainted, and their German teacher was cordial to us all. Their English teacher and I talked casually in the beginning, but she soon let me know that she was debating whether to leave the Pibroch Colony school after teaching there four years. As she talked to me, I could empathize with her dilemma. I invited her to visit the Athabasca Colony School. To share the problems of an English teacher from another colony might give us insight into mutual concerns. She never came. I heard later that she had left the school. The idea that teachers on Hutterite colonies should meet to share resources, ideas and concerns seemed to have merit to me, but I could never find anyone to support it. Because of the low status of the English colony school with both the Hutterite community and with the county school board, any change or new ideas were likely to be overlooked. No one ever said so explicitly, but I felt this to be true.

The Second Year of Teaching

During the second year of my teaching there, I kept my journal more faithfully. Patterns of behaviour from the first year began to emerge that I could recognize and accept. Some behaviours and attitudes, though, I still found very hard to tolerate and to cope with.

As at the beginning of every year, great enthusiasm was shown by the children and the adults when school began. The children would loiter at recesses and after school to talk or just to be near me. Knowing everyone and being familiar with the colony, it almost felt like a kind of homecoming for me. They gave me gifts from the garden and we caught up on news of our families.

Unlike children outside the colony whose fathers go off to work and the child does not know what they do or where they go, on the colony all the children can see exactly what their father does and know where he is. Whether carrying a young child home at noon for his nap, or hearing the child's prayers at the end of the day, the fathers are very involved in bringing up their children to be obedient to God and to the colony. This duty was taken very seriously. One young child had had open heart surgery and walking to the kitchen, his father had told me about it and how thankful they were that it had gone well.

I began to see that the communal style of life promoted a healthy family structure. The needs of the community preceded those of the

family, but both were considered. No one received any wage for their labour, but all the needs of the people were met. There was no one who didn't have some meaningful work to do. I began to think about this alternative way of life, comparing it to the one that I lived in, and finding much that was good.

Difficulties soon began to show up in the classroom regarding the student's ability to do the academic work. The children seemed to not be able to retain information. Even when they could do something on their own for a period of time, the next time that the same kind of problem arose, it would be as if they had never heard of it. One boy told me that he had trouble learning from a text. As I watched the children with their elders, I had observed that they would concentrate on every detail when an adult would be doing something that they wanted to learn. Later, the children might draw a diagram of the object, or make a model and try to duplicate whatever it was. They also asked for books specific to their interests. Where we obtain knowledge from books, their first source of learning seemed to be real life. Children were not excluded from adult activities as children so often are in general society, but were to be found wherever work or social activities were occurring on the colony.

In the reading series we used, the context of many stories was unfamiliar. Much of the vocabulary was unknown, resulting in low comprehension of the plot. This made reading difficult and lowered the child's motivation and interest. Library books, when the children could choose their own books, were much more stimulating and of high interest. Everyone read the picture books, and the older students soon became familiar with authors who wrote what they liked to read. They gave me specific requests for books which I was glad to try to fill to encourage their reading. Both the town library and the elementary school library were helpful and every two weeks, after school, I would choose fifty books to bring to the students.

We used our experiences to write stories, poems, plays and letters. Every evening the children had to memorize a verse for German school next day, or face the strap, possibly. In German school they learned hymns, the stories from the Bible and to read and write Gothic German. In English school we tried to use some of the children's ability to memorize, supplementing that kind of learning with other methods to foster understanding.

Standards of behaviour were also different in German school. The boys would have to wear their black jackets that matched their pants. The students were expected to sit still, stay in their desk and look to the front of the room. Often, German school would still be in session when I would arrive. I would wait quietly in the back room. When the students were dismissed, the boys, oldest to youngest would exit, followed by the girls in the same order. Last of all would come the German teacher. The children would take their Bibles home and get a snack. The boys would change their jackets for play ones. Depending on the time they were dismissed, English school would sometimes start late before everyone had returned. The colony moved to its own rhythm and the same events could be relied upon to occur regularly from morning to night at a comfortable pace.

The Hutterite people on this colony did not change to daylight saving time in the spring as Athabasca and surrounding communities did. They could not see any reason to. From April until October, our time was one hour behind that of the town. This was an inconvenience sometimes. Their attitude to time did not seem rigid. The children often came late to school with one excuse or another, usually that they were doing a small job. When I was invited for coffee to the preacher's house, no attention was paid to the clock and not to seem rude and rush away meant that I might be a few minutes late returning to school. At the end of the day, I had until four o'clock to finish my work and leave. Then the children had their second session of German school when it suited the German teacher, more regularly in the winter than the summer.

Whenever any work would involve the whole of the adult population, like butchering fowl, or harvesting the garden and crop, some of the oldest students would be absent to babysit, to drive a tractor, or to help as they were told. Each mother was allowed to visit her home colony for three weeks each year. Her grade one or two child would be taken out of school and go, too. Sometimes the child asked for work to take along. I presumed that the children would go to school at the other colony as children from other colonies did who visited our school.

Materials for the school still went missing. After two different locks were jimmied, I decided that I would not lock anything up, although the Hutterites locked up everything for the same reason. I explained to the children that all the things belonged to them, that if the supplies disappeared we wouldn't have what we needed. A whole box of

black pens and four blue pens disappeared; my math set and eraser "walked" out of my desk; a mother took a two litre bottle of white glue when she needed it. It seemed easier to store these items at my home and bring them as needed. It was inconvenient but it did solve a big part of the problem. I mentioned to the colony and to the superintendent that some kind of store room was needed at the school.

Many things seemed like contradictions to me. When the homes were so spotless, why did the children often litter in the school room? They were the ones who cleaned the room at the end of the day. Each child had a job, sweeping, taking out the garbage, straightening books, etc. It would be to their advantage to be neat.

In art we drew around the outline of each child and he or she was to fill in the details. To my consternation, the boys all wanted cigarette pockets on their shirts, and cigarettes in their mouths. They wanted blue jeans or tight pants, not the comfortable fitting black pants that they wore. They wanted fancy belts, not suspenders. The girls modified their traditional hair style. When the likenesses were completed, we put them up around the room. The next day I was asked to remove them because they were offensive to the people.

The children told me that they were not allowed to take pictures. After I knew, I respected their wish. I left my camera home and even told visitors that pictures were not permitted. When a new baby was born, however, the mother would ask me to take some photographs of the baby and her other children, and I would. She would be very pleased and grateful. Maybe it was like the preacher said, "It's not what you do, but how you do it." Rules on the colony certainly were not hard and fast. I also heard one of the men, who was listening to western music on the radio excuse himself saying, "Well, we're human, too".

The school received films through the mail from CAMS, a central distributing agency. The older teens, not in school, were taking the films before I ever knew that they had arrived and were watching them at night in the school. One night they had tangled a film badly and had the audacity to leave it for us to straighten out. We were writing to the students at an isolated school in Ontario at Kashebowie. These same youths were opening our mail and reading it. One of the older school girls told me that she had seen them watching a small television in their room in the evening. They even used the school room to smoke in. There was no smoking on the colony. I don't understand how or why they wanted to do these things that contravened the colony's religious

beliefs and way of life. It was hard to believe that the adults did not know. Later, I heard this age referred to as the "foolish years". I wondered if more tolerance was shown to this age, before the young adults were baptised and became full members of the church with the total the commitment that demanded.

Parent teacher meetings were held twice yearly. The mothers usually came. One of the younger boy's attitude to his mother surprised me. He shook his mat in her face to her consternation and laughed. Yet the mothers told me that the children must behave. Use the strap. Later I saw another child loudly sassing her father. At coffee, I saw a younger girl climb up on a cupboard to disobey her parents and take a second dose of cough syrup. There was no reprisal for these children. Why should they behave any differently for me?

My son is a psychologist. It used to amuse him and maybe irk him a little when I would jokingly tell him that the Hutterites were the best psychologists that I knew. Why did I say that? There was no concrete reason. But I felt that all the behaviour in the classroom was being orchestrated to suit the aims of the colony.

The preacher offered us a trip to Fort Edmonton if I would remove the tape recorder. I would have removed it anyway if asked, but maybe this made it more palatable for the children, especially an older boy who was making a collection of western music for himself by taping over old tapes that he found. He was going away for ten days, to visit another colony in order to have a tooth extraction done there. He missed our trip which was enjoyable and unremarkable except for the place that I rode in the van. A chrome arm chair was placed right between the two front seats, between the preacher and the farm boss, who drove. The chair was for me. Grandma and an older girl rode in the back with all the children. My chair crowded the driver and I felt uncomfortable. It made me wonder how they saw me and my role as English teacher.

The tape recorder was gone but not forgotten. The older boy's sister, who was being helpful, told me that her father needed the tape recorder. I thought to myself that she probably meant her brother. I didn't bring it and a few days later the boy demanded that I bring it. The preacher (how did he know?) defused the issue by taking him out of school to help him. I had a feeling that the boy was taking some kind of instruction from the preacher now that he would soon be fifteen, of age to leave school. He stopped participating in the games that the children

played and was more reserved with me. He treated the younger boys with great affection, being helpful and kind to them.

The issue of the music did not go away. In late December, the second preacher came to school and challenged me,"Is this music part of the school program?"

"No," I answered. The records were something that the children had been listening to since I had taught there. I had scrounged many more records for them. The second preacher told us that the music and films at night must stop. There had been a meeting of ministers. The record player and film projector would have to go.

Then he had words with the older boy. "You told your grandfather that you wouldn't listen any more." To me he said, "They tell me that he has a key to the cupboard where all this is kept."

I was taken aback. "There is no cupboard here that we can lock." The youngest boy ran over to show how the cupboard door was jimmied.

The boy entreated,"I won't listen anymore."

The second preacher stated,"You said that before."

"I won't."

"And we'll have a round up of tapes." I asked how long the audiovisual equipment had been there. The second preacher figured nine years. He said that it was all right if a child was listening and reading the same story. He turned and strode out leaving me shaken. The boy was away next day. His brother laughingly said that he had hurt his foot. I wondered if he had been punished. The punishment meted out to me was shunning. For three days no one looked at me or spoke to me or smiled. At dinner, I sat all by myself at my end of the table. I felt shattered, but in the classroom, life continued as normal.

When the boy finally returned to school, I told him that I had been worried about him. Tears filled his eyes. He said nothing, but I again wondered about the kind of punishment he would have had to face.

I removed all the audiovisual equipment, except the film projector, returning it to the elementary school where it had originally come from. Because the film projector had been bought for the colony school and at Christmas and other holidays, special films were shown to the people, permission was given to keep it for these occasions. Sometimes the R.C.M.P. or Health Unit nurses would bring a film, and we could use it then. The previous teacher had told me to use films often as a means of extending the children's knowledge of the world. However, I was finding it effective to teach the basics in a simple, straight forward way. It seemed suitable for this place and these people. I soon seldom missed the films. I was beginning to see that they were not really part of these children's world.

A few days later we had our second Christmas concert. The children and I had made homemade ice cream to serve as a treat and all the colony came. When the children had to change costumes behind the curtain of our makeshift stage, the sound of a solitary singing voice was heard, soon joined by another and another until all the men and women were singing Christmas hymns in German, in beautiful, rich harmony. The sound mesmerized me and filled me with awe.

The children's obedience was continually being questioned. Even in October, the German teacher had told me that the children were not behaving. They were his responsibility and I should tell him. "Why didn't you?" he demanded to know. "Tell me. They deserve a strapping. If you can't, I will make them behave. Who is it?" Taken by complete surprise, I said nothing, finally blurting out, "And they don't even take off their hats!" "My, my!" he said and proceeded to lecture the boys on their manners, continuing to state that dinner would be at 11:30 a.m., there would be no going home at recesses when the parents would not be in the houses. He made the rules clear to both the children and me. The tension was tangible.

Behaviour was often disruptive. The students perceived that I was reluctant to tell the German teacher of their misdemeanors. There were many incidents of hurting one another, of breaking another's partly completed project, of being late, of breaking school equipment, of malingering at their studies. When the students didn't want me to know what they were saying, they would revert to German to speak to each other. As a child, my grandmother had taught me a little German and after a while, in context, I usually knew what they were saying, which took the satisfaction of it for them away. In contrast, out of the blue, one of the very bright young girls gave me a surprise hug.

Early in the new year, the preacher and his wife had me over for coffee and the message again was to spank the children. A local elderly woman came to teach the children leather work. She was kind and patient and soft spoken. They took to her immediately and found this new activity very interesting. When I drove her to town after school, her sharp perception of the children surprised me. "How difficult it must be to teach them!" She became someone to whom I could speak freely of the problems I faced every day at the school, and with the wisdom of age, she often had useful observations. She came weekly, until the projects were completed. We all were pleased to invite her back in subsequent years.

During the winter months, when it was cold outside, the children would play games inside. I had bought some floor hockey sticks and we would move the desks aside and have a good, rousing game. At the end of January, one of the older girls said, "No hockey in this school room!" That was that. The children refused to play. No more hockey.

In late February, The preacher came into the school unexpectedly and sat on a back bench. It was 11:00 a.m. and I was reading the youngest children a book called *A Story, A Story*. The older students were doing math at their desks. When I finished the story and told the children what to continue working at, I went back to the preacher.

"This is worse than I thought," he greeted me with. "They should stay in their seats and not get out. They should raise their hand if they want anything. Look! They even look back. And it costs a lot of money. This is not a playroom. They cannot learn without discipline."

I could think of nothing to say. We just sat a bit. Finally, I said that the discipline did not suit me, either.

Then he said that all he wanted was for the school to be like the school in town. We talked at odds. Finally, I went to help the children. He sat until 11:30 a.m., dinner time, and I thought I saw honest consternation on his face.

As the children left, I asked the preacher if he would come back next week. "Why, every day, if you like," he said. His remark made me laugh. Somehow, I was too late for dinner. The children were already returning. One of the mothers had me over for coffee and some kind words. The music teacher from the town school told me

what a good job I was doing. She heard it from someone that this mother knew. What was I to think?

The preacher did return. He came one morning when we were watching a film. "Is this school?"

I responded, "Yes." I invited him in, but he declined and turned and left. He came again at recess in the afternoon. Some children were inside the school. He said that the children had to go outside.

"All you do is play." I demurred. He continued, "I will have to look at their books. I'll have to go to the other schools and see."

"Yes, that would be good," I retorted. "And talk to the superintendent, too," I added.

"I will." He became angry. "Why, when I taught school, you could hear a pin drop. Thirty - eight children, they never turned around, never got out of their seats..."

I said firmly, "Things have changed."

"I will come back," were his parting words. He did return at 3:00 p.m. when we were watching the rest of the film. His question was the same, "Are these for school?" Again, I said, "Yes." Again, he turned and left.

Not long after, the German teacher told me that I was the boss in my school. "Forget (the preacher). But there will be no more movies unless they are after school or at noon." Indirectly I had been told that movies could no longer be shown in school time, and I was amused at the way in which it had been expressed.

A couple of weeks later I wrote my annual letter of resignation. This was becoming my personal standing joke. The letter this year was better thought out, but I didn't even take it to the superintendent. The writing of it made me feel better, and I filed it for future reference.

The oldest boy was turning fifteen soon. He was making me a leather wallet as a parting gift, tooling it, dyeing it and sewing it. He told me that the children did not have to paint. It was too messy. I suggested that more subjects of interest could be offered to the older boys, like mechanics. He responded, "What for? If you want to learn

mechanics, there is the garage; carpentry, there is the carpenter's shop", and so on. I had no reply. That was their way of learning. He would soon be apprenticed to one of the men to learn their skills. When he said, "I can hardly wait to get out of here," I hesitated and thought about what he had said, finally saying, "If I were you, I'd feel the same way."

We finished off the year making stilts and painting them, planting and growing the many slips my mother donated and doing our regular studies. I gave some of the women a ride to the hospital when they were going to visit and delivered some chickens to a neighbor for one of the mothers. I committed myself to returning. These last two months, the children had been trying most of the time in school and everyone had been happy, like when I first came here. I was content.

Coffee at one of the elderly couples ended with the following advice:

1. The teacher must be strict.
2. Children should be obedient.
3. Parents must help by raising children right.
4. Parents should not have to do school work with the child at home.

The children were never asked to do school work at home. With their memorization for German school, that was enough. It was important that they understood what they were doing in English school, too, not just that it was done.

I was invited one day for coffee, only to find all the women congregated in the one house discussing their councillor. The councillor must have alluded to getting rid of Hutterite schools and the people seemed upset. As talk went round the room, one person would denigrate the councillor and the next would add to it. I was glad that it was not me that they were discussing although I realized that another day it was possible that it might be... That councillor was defeated in the next election. These people knew how to make their franchise count!

The Third Year of Teaching

My third year at the colony school continued in much the same vein as the two previous ones. The teachers went on strike, much to the disgust of the colony. They did not approve. Weren't we getting enough money?

By the second month, misbehaviour was common again. A mother had come into the school, chasing one of the girls that she said

had hurt her child with a strap. Lateness, littering, teasing younger children, mischief, not trying at their studies, I again began to question the value of teaching at this school.

One of the girls told me that I should let my hair grow long so that I could braid it. A boy asked me if I wore jeans. I had made it a habit to wear skirts in deference to their mode of dress. The German teacher complained about my attending administration meetings and leaving the children unsupervised. It wasn't safe. When a hot water heater was installed under the sink, he told me to tell the preacher. I had presumed that the preacher would know. Was that my responsibility? Burning grass set the chicken barn on fire, causing great excitement until it was successfully extinguished using the liquid manure tank. The school had the only fire extinguishers. A falling meteorite nearby caused one of the women to wonder if it could be caused by demons.

The shaping of the children's and my behaviour was continuing with varying degrees of success. Films were a rarely shown. The expectations of the children now were that they would stay in their seats, waiting quietly if they needed help and to put up their hand. They were to be punctual, to not litter, and to snack only at recess.

During gopher catching season in the spring, I complained to the German teacher that the children were coming late to school. He advised me to use the hand bell. This was not effective as the children claimed not to hear it. Eventually, the preacher turned up at the door, carrying a two by four piece of lumber. "Are the children coming late?" He threatened to spank them if they were. This carried a lot more weight.

We had a social afternoon, a play, a film and refreshments, at the end of the year and all the people on the colony attended. One of the mothers told me,"Well, I'll miss seeing you coming every day, but then I'll get used to it." The way she expressed these sentiments reminded me of the invisible wall that was always there. I was with them, but not of them. Close as I felt to them, I had my place. Because I had grown fond of the people, especially the children, and accepting of their ways, sometimes I resented this.

The Fourth and Fifth Years

The next year brought a tragedy to our family when our daughter-in-law died of cancer. The illness was prolonged and drained all our family's emotional resources. Our son quit his work in order to care for his wife and children. Every day, after school I would visit her for an hour as she lingered in the hospital. My teaching must have suffered, but I was only aware of the spoken and unspoken caring and support that the Hutterite people gave to me. When she died in the early spring, most of the adults came to the funeral.

It is my opinion that everyone has a spiritual nature that he may choose to express in various ways. As if by osmosis, from my close daily contact with the Hutterite people, I began to live my life more aware of my spirituality. I attended church after a long hiatus. I became more aware of people within my circle of acquaintances who were in need of support of some kind. I became open to lending support and to accepting support if I should need it. I felt as though I had added a new facet to my living.

Sometime in this year, a new German teacher was appointed by the colony due to the previous teacher's ill health. Like the former teacher, this German teacher was also the gardener, the two jobs being alloted together. In this case, he was also the second preacher. The new teacher wanted a more disciplined school. He told me to write the name of any misbehaving child on the board so that he might chastise him or her. There would be no excuse. His wife commented to one of the older girls that the children were not learning anything. "Why?" I wondered. More than once I had been told that the same amount of education as their parents, a grade six level, was adequate for the children. This was not the level we strived for necessarily. Some of the older students were enrolled in the grade seven correspondence course in language arts.

Stressing more rigid discipline sometimes seemed to result in rebellion and misbehaviour, but I tried to reinforce more orderly behaviour. The new German teacher seemed to be genuinely respected by the children and they showed affection for him. He seemed to be a reasonable man and was friendly towards me. He had seeded a part of the large garden to grass to make a playing field for the children and this was much appreciated by all of us.

Because the colony sold it's milk to the Northern Alberta Dairy Pool, the field trip this year was a trip to the dairy in Edmonton to see how the milk was processed. It was the new German teacher's idea that if the children deserved it, i.e. behaved well in school, that we would also visit West Edmonton Mall. It would be hard to describe the anticipation! The Mall offered a pass for admission to all the rides you wanted for a nominal sum and every child had the prerequisite amount of money on the day of our trip. All the new things to see at the dairy could hardly hold their attention. Never could there be a group of children who enjoyed themselves more than these when we finally got to the mall. From 4:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m., the children rode round and round, laughing and having a happy time. One young boy became ill to his stomach. Still, he wanted to stay. Near the end of the time, the adults had a turn on some of the rides, using the children's passes. The children's enjoyment was so genuine and deep that I felt happy only to watch them. One young boy next day told me that he never dreamed he would ever be able to ride all those rides...he was overcome with his feelings.

My journal is incomplete for the 1985 - 1986 school term. Suffice it to say that even more control was put on the school to restrict the children's contact with the outside world and to make them obedient. We went on no field trip. The health and dental nurses were a welcome diversion from regular work. Creativity was stifled for the children and for me. I often felt that I was not able to use all of my training and experience as a teacher. The routine of every day like every other day became tedious. I became the one who looked longingly out the window. Although I spent seven hours a day on the colony, most of this time was spent in the classroom and there was usually no one with whom I could freely converse.

The boy who had been labelled hyperactive had become an excellent student, one of the few who took real pride in doing his best work. Age had its status and he was a good example for the other students and helpful to me. He was gifted artistically and had a painting hung at the Alberta Correspondence School in Barrhead. A woman from Quebec, visiting the colony offered to buy another, but he gave it to her. When we had a one day lesson in cake decorating, he made the best roses. This was useful when one of the girls got married. When we decided to learn to crochet and make cushion covers, he was able to comprehend the pattern and help everyone. These were unusual skills for a boy and he took a lot of teasing, but he just smiled at his

tormentors. He was to turn fifteen in March and had told me that he would like to stay to finish the term. Again, his peers teased him. When the day of his birthday came, he left. Maybe all the talk had been a way of expressing appreciation for the school and to me.

When this boy left, his "friend" became the eldest student in the school. The gifted boy had explained to me that all the children had a "friend", an age mate with whom they played when they were young and with whom they would work when they became older. All the grades had two students from different families, and these were most often the same sex. In the one instance where there was a boy and girl, these students played with the other boys or girls closest to their age. In the case of the boy who was now the eldest, for a long time he had been in the shadow of his clever friend. This had caused some resentment. Now the eldest, instead of setting a good example for the younger boys in particular, became a rebel, and created trouble. It was not only at school that he was disobedient, but also at home his mother disclosed. He was a well muscled, temperamental boy. I felt slightly threatened by him.

There were two common misconception that I often heard about the students on the colony. One was that these students were not bright. During the second year, the school psychologist for the county had visited, asking me if any of the children needed testing for special programs. I declined his services and I think he understood when I explained there was no need for it. As I watched the children, how they explored problems that interested them and solved the questions that arose from daily living, I had decided that these were, on the whole, a very intelligent group of students.

The second misconception was that the children must be a very well behaved group, that there would never be any discipline problems. Trying not to smile, I would always answer that children are children. They acted like all children. Because they had so much freedom when their parents would be involved in colony work, perhaps these children got into more mischief than most!

As the year progressed, I questioned the value of my remaining at the colony to teach. I tried to consider their perspective, not that they ever hinted that I should. If they wanted more discipline, maybe a stricter, different teacher would be more suitable. The superintendent was also changing positions and moving to a new district. I wondered what this would portend for the colony. I pondered the matter

lengthily. I did not want to leave because of the strong emotional bond between myself and the people. Finally, I took the painful step of asking for a leave of absence for a year. I had decided that I would take the opportunity to study, and to research about the Hutterite people. Removed from the situation, I would be better able to sort out my feelings towards my teaching and the colony. The school board and superintendent gave me their approval. I told the German teacher and preacher sometime in May. They made no comment. The German teacher asked me later if I had told the children. I hadn't. I did not tell the children until the last day of school in order to spare their feelings and mine.

The year's leave I spent at the University of Alberta, enrolled in the Master of Education program in the Department of Educational Foundations. At the university I was able to discover for myself the remarkable history of the Hutterian Brethren.

> A knowledge of the history of the Hutterites and of how they incorporate the past into the present is central to understanding Hutterite society (Hostetler, 1974:xii).

4. Returning to Teach at the Hutterite Colony: An Assessment of the Sixth Year

Following the year's leave of absence spent at the University of Alberta, I returned to the Hutterite colony school at Athabasca to resume my teaching. In the interim, one superintendent had come and gone and a new had been hired. I had met him briefly when I had made my commitment to return. The teacher who had taken my place for the year had basically carried on the program of studies following the plan that I had left. There were some improvements made to the room. She had obtained a larger desk with book shelves built on the wall behind it from the county, and there was more bulletin board space.

The children seemed reticent to discuss the previous school year. I did not ask but on occasion some incidents were mentioned. They told me that when their desks were untidy, she would dump the contents out onto the floor. She also taught them to give each other the "bumps" when ever one of the children had a birthday. I neither condoned nor prohibited this practice, but because of the difference in size and age of the children, discouraged it.

The elementary school principal mentioned that the teacher had had a negative experience at the colony. The deputy superintendent stated that he was out every week, maybe a little facetiously. He explained that her expectations of the children had been unrealistic.

She had used a different rationale than I had when grading the children's work. My philosophy was that if a child was trying and making steady progress, the child deserved a good grade. Although at the end of the school year the entire course of studies for that grade might not be completed, the child would proceed to the next grade, continuing whatever he might need to know in the next school term. For these children with a comparatively short length of time to pursue their formal education, the desire of only minimal competence, and the low esteem of English education in their society, what useful purpose would it serve to not promote the child at the year end? She had demoted one girl to the previous grade because of her lack of ability in reading.

The teacher taking my place had requested a copier for the school. The German teacher had approached the county to share the cost, as the neighboring school jurisdiction had with the Pibroch Colony. The county refused. He then bought a used one for the colony

and it served the purpose, but was often in need of adjustment. The German teacher became adept at keeping the machine in good repair. Not only was it useful for the school, but it was also used to copy sermons and items of interest to share with other colonies.

My year at the university had affirmed much of what I had come to know about about the Hutterian Brethren from observing and being with them over the five years of my teaching tenure. It also deepened my understanding of the place of religion in their life.

I returned with mixed feelings. I wanted to return to know if my being there as a teacher could make a difference and be beneficial for both the children and for me. I wanted to be able to grow in my profession, to be the best teacher that I could. I still felt a very strong emotional attachment to the people on the colony and wanted to be with them. Perhaps as my first superintendent had said to me, I would stay on the colony and teach until I was ready to retire.

I did not expect the teaching to be easy. I hoped that with more understanding, I would better be able to use different strategies to cope with whatever difficulties would arise. Like the Hutterites, I wanted to be able to keep some emotional distance to protect my feelings and to be more objective about what occurred in the school.

I attended a workshop on journal writing (Progoff, 1972; Craig, 1984) which resulted in my journal becoming more methodical and useful. This sixth year, I kept a journal and anecdotal records on a regular, daily basis. Each day after school, I would write for half an hour, all notable behaviours, events, and circumstances of the day. Periodically, I would pull common threads from the entries, assisting themes and patterns to emerge. Rereading and reflecting upon these entries informed me of my teaching practise.

The Sixth Year

As I entered the colony property I was greeted by a sign painted on a huge rock. The whole rock had been painted deep sky blue decorated with a bright pink, wild rose. The sign read, "Welcome to the Whispering Hills Colony. Enter at Your Own Risk." I had to smile at the irony in the message.

This year I had resolved not to keep school supplies at home but to encourage the children to be responsible to use only what was needed

and save the rest until later. The colony had changed its time to follow daylight saving time because the last teacher had four young children that she did not want to be alone after school.

There was no doubting the warm reception that the colony gave me on my return.The preacher came over at noon to shake my hand , the Hutterite gesture of peace and something that I did not take lightly. The children spoke in exaggerated politeness, "Excuse me, Mrs. Dobson..." and everyone was cooperative and helpful. Fresh relish and vegetables gave my car a fine aroma at home time. Three girls stayed to visit after school.

Because I had to be out of the building before 4:30 p.m. daily, I found it difficult to find and organize all the materials. It would take time. Over the summer the reading books especially were used by the people. In the last term, there had been one teacher and an aide at the school, the aide part time for the four kindergarten students. When materials were needed from the town school, one of these women would leave early to collect them. This year I would be alone. There were fifteen children attending school, of whom four were in grade one. I had to establish some new routines to have more time for these beginners.

The second week, five of the adults joined me for coffee and blueberry pie after dinner in the kitchen. I was invited to come when the man with the fabrics to sell arrived. An older girl tended the children briefly. One mother asked for a ride to see her son in the hospital. The milkman's wife asked me in for coffee and we visited while her husband, an early riser, napped on the couch. One of the fathers on the way to the kitchen talked about harvesting. "That's not women's work anyway." One of the boys who had been a good student when in school, teased me about being with the children. There were copious gifts of food. The people made me feel that I had never been away.

The copier, being fairly new to the school, was a source of contention and the children had been told not to use it. A schedule was made up for the oldest students to copy pictures for the younger. One of the elders came in to copy some pages of beautiful handwritten German script and he was very fussy that the margins be exact. He also wanted to copy on both sides. The girls who were watching could tell him how, although I did not know. Toward the end of September, when I arrived, German school was still in progress. "Holding court," The

German teacher explained. Some of the children had been using the copier. No one would confess. "I'll find out eventually," he stated as they left.

Being harvest season, the older boys had been taken out of school to help already. One day, the German teacher took four students away to help with the potatoes and the school got two preschoolers to look after. The four students were away for two days. I was not advised of these absences, but was to accept them. Thanksgiving for the Hutterites was when they finished the harvest. It did not necessarily go by the calendar.

Visitors arrived from Headingly, Manitoba in a flashy red GMC van. The women dressed a little differently with their arms bare to the elbow, unlike the long sleeves worn by this colony. "Too worldly," one of the girls called them. Although the men were dressed in black, she called them Mennonites and told me that sometimes they marry Hutterites, but not often. For the next while, in school, the girls would roll their sleeves up to the elbow and giggle among themselves.

The children all displayed a positive attitude in school. One boy and a girl were especially helpful. I appreciated this. For some reason, the previous teacher had not ordered the workbooks for the children for reading, math and spelling. This hindered the children from being as independent as they might be in their studies. The county order clerk did her best to get them quickly for us. Forms from the county office also were missing and did not arrive. This was a puzzle as well as an inconvenience.

The German teacher was concerned that the children behave well in school. He told me that if any child was disobedient, I was to put his or her name on the blackboard. Although I agreed to do so, I soon developed a great reluctance.It was difficult to be absolutely fair in practice. As before, I felt that I wanted to be able to work cooperatively with the children and be able to rely on their good will without the threat of force. In any event, the other children always told the German teacher of a misdemeanor. The good behaviour of the children also was predicated on whether the German teacher was at home or not. To put names on the board when one of the older teenagers was conducting German school would not be effective. Thinking about this, I realized that it was I who was not being obedient because my values were different.

One day when I had an infected eye and had had a difficult morning keeping the peace, I had gone home for lunch and to bathe my eye. This was rather foolish of me because of the time involved driving. Seeing the children's worried reaction as I returned to school made me realize that I had contravened a convention also, going off by myself without telling anyone.

One of the fathers played baseball with us, encouraging his sons. It was fun for all of us. When later he asked me for coffee, his understanding of the natives' situation at Wabasca was interesting. He spoke of the native people trying to hang onto the old ways and how modernization was a poor fit as the people did not understand how to maintain a sewer system, for example. He delivered vegetables, eggs and chickens there regularly. Some of the women came in while I was there and I learned of a pending marriage. The girl involved shyly smiled and smiled.

At coffee, the German teacher spoke of the history of the Hutterite people. His wife spoke of the kibbutz in Israel. The milkman accompanied me back to the school after dinner and told me his opinion of free trade with well thought out arguments. He then asked me if I thought it possible for men to live hundreds of years as it was stated in the Bible. I did not know...it stretched my thinking to realize that these people were both well informed and took the Bible literally.

A story about the Japanese Canadians and their treatment in the second world war brought out the idea of discrimination against people with different colored skins. One of the girls said, "Hutterites have white skins but they are discriminated against," as she related this concept to herself.

The two oldest girls had a correspondence lesson from last year returned saying that they cheated. It took until October to get this lesson completed again. Another student received an "A" in science; the grade one students were making good progress. As in any group of students, some applied themselves more earnestly and honestly.

The preacher went away to a minister's meeting early in October.

One of the eight year old girls was a wonderful, caring babysitter for her little sister and she would bring her to the school to visit in the afternoon. One of the other girls, also eight or nine years old, teased her baby sister until she screamed, appeased her, then teased her again.

Some problems were reoccurring. The absence of students when needed for work or who went with their mother to visit seemed to be more than I remembered. The son of the German teacher missed a day almost every week. One day his daughter came to me with a big, shiny golden apple. "Did my father tell you to get ...'s things ready to go away?" I replied in the negative. In a few days, her brother came to tell me that he was going. "My mother said so." He missed three weeks of grade two studies.

Items went missing from my desk one night. Shortly after, The German teacher informed me that supplies had been taken from the storage area, too. He offered to keep them at his house, saying that he suspected the preschoolers who really would not understand to leave them alone.

When the copier needed developer, the county refused to supply it because the copier wasn't theirs. This attitude on the part of the county administration office troubled me. It was diametrically opposite to what it had been under the first superintendent. The order clerk told me that a request for a one burner hot plate that I had made for science experiments had been questioned also. I was used to using my budget to purchase what the school in my opinion needed. This scrutiny seemed to indicate a lack of trust or criticism of the school operation.

The superintendent had visited the school once early in the school year for an hour and had spoken of his previous work. He compared the Old Order Mennonite attitude to education with that of the Hutterite people. He asked me about the colony getting a computer. I told him that we had had one demonstrated for a day, but they were not ready for one yet. His comment was that they could be made to want one. He commented that we should encourage higher education here.

The German teacher had been aware of the problem of the lack of secure storage and also the lack of space for books for some time. He and I had often spoken of possible solutions. Now he had it in mind to add a small room and change the entry to the building. However, he was finding the county maintenance supervisor uncooperative and difficult to work with. They wanted to bill the colony for labour to do the work. Their estimate for the renovations came to $11,000. "They'll never go for that!" the German teacher stated, referring to the elders. He decided that he would invite the superintendent and the maintenance supervisor for dinner to discuss the matter.

The children had a comment to make about the maintenance supervisor. "He always comes at dinner time." It was true.

When a grade one student was away for three weeks, she completed much of her math, according to her workbook. However, in fact, she could not even name the number "7", for example. Her mother told me that the teacher at the other colony had suggested that her daughter might be hard of hearing. I did not think so. The mother went on to say that the use of the strap made it hard for the children.

From mid September until the end of November there had been a gradual eroding of the attitude of the older children in the school. The oldest girl in particular, set an example that was detrimental to progress in the school. Because age lent status, the other girls were inclined to follow her lead. She was lax and not caring in her own studies. If asked to help the grade ones, she would do their work for them. Another time, she took only a minute to have them all crying. She had a younger girl carry her messages, although I would only respond to her, herself. She bickered with the older boys. She engaged in mischief, hiding part of the tape dispenser and glue. Playing baseball, she cheated and tried to cause an uproar. She did not do her share of cleaning. She sometimes came late and would get a snack at recesses, which was not allowed. I mentioned her attitude to the German teacher and he agreed that he had noticed it also. He scolded her to no avail. This was her last year of school as she would become fifteen years of age in the spring. She was already out of German school.

With the fall work completed on the farm, German school was to be held at four p.m. and I would have only half an hour to prepare to leave at the end of the day. By mid November, the children's attitude in the school had become difficult to work around. I began again to think that no matter how I worked at teaching, it did not really matter if they did not reciprocate and work at learning. The preparation for the Christmas concert precipitated a new round of arguments, choosing parts. The older students who had left school had taken their hockey sticks to play in the evenings. I had to buy more for the younger children. One boy took his home to hide saying, "Grandpa will throw them out!"

I had requested that the children be allowed to go to the Elementary school to choose their own library books for once. I had not received a reply until one morning of the alloted day I was asked

what time we wanted to go. The children enjoyed the trip, the librarian serving us sweets. They peeked around all corners, intrigued at this new experience.

Feeling disheartened, I had not gone to dinner on two different occasions. The first time, one of the younger boys had said to me that it was because I had marking to do. The second time, he told me, "They are grumbling because you don't come."

The first parent teacher interviews were held at the end of November. Unlike the fifteen minute allotment of time in town, these parents stayed to visit. One expressed that she liked to get out of the house. As before, all families except one attended. One mother was able to give me an insight into her daughter's learning style. One family, both mother and father came and examined all their children's books page by page, staying over an hour, finally leaving with a "keep up the good work."

A Gideon Bible had appeared in my desk drawer. One of the boys volunteered that his dad wore homemade shoes on Sunday. An older girl told me with a laugh that she was doing good work, but it may not last! I noted to myself that there were no competitive games played here. The children in their free time often played at an activity related to adult life. When the boys rescued a cat in dire threat to its life by the big Newfie dog, one of the girls told me, "We shouldn't make animals suffer."

The elderly preacher conducted German school in December when the German teacher was again away. As I arrived, he was scolding the children in German. As he left, he stated, "The children can't remember if the teacher last year strapped them more than the teacher this year." I told him that I didn't use the strap.

"Use it. Use it often and hard," he advised. Then he added, "But if they still don't behave, I need a bigger strap, a thicker strap, but that probably won't work either." He laughed, "I left it out for you." Sure enough, it was on his desk. The oldest girl put it away later.

Preparing for Christmas, I asked the German teacher if the children would like to sing in German at the concert. "If you like," he replied. The children were enjoying sewing little red felt stockings to put treats in, and to hang on the tree. The concert was not coming

together yet perhaps because so many of the children were very young and would get tired practicing.

The people became more subdued and seemed to turn inward as the religious holiday approached. Meal times were quieter. They were aloof with me, not always acknowledging me. This behaviour no longer surprised or offended me. I recognized its source. It did make me feel very alone, though.

The German teacher told me that the county had gone back on its word regarding new concrete steps for the entry. He had given up hope that the county might participate in the building of the addition to the school. The maintenance superintendent had told the German teacher that if he didn't like it, the bus ran by the door. This was taken as a threat. The German teacher talked to me of other options if necessary, like a private school where they could hire their own teacher. A delegation came out from the county office, the superintendent, the maintenance superintendent, the district councillor, and another councillor. They stayed ten minutes in the school, saying hardly a word. A written maintenance requisition was asked for and I wrote one out while they had dinner in the kitchen. The only comment that the superintendent made to me was that he wanted the school to have a computer. The atmosphere was hardly cordial, certainly not cooperative or understanding. Both the German teacher and I were sorely disappointed.

The copier was repaired by the German teacher putting a thin sheet of paper around the roller to replace the worn away rubber. When it worked, we both laughed. How resourceful they were! The milkman had received the highest award for the quality of his milk for the second time.

The day before the concert, I showed a film called *Wilderness Family* to the school children. A scene where a bear frightens the family caused three grade one boys to cry. To follow the children's performance at the Christmas concert, I had obtained two religious films as requested by the people. One was the life of the apostle Paul. It was poorly produced, but the adults liked it. The second film was the life of Mother Theresa. By now the children and adults were tired and they began to drift away. The preacher stayed to the end though, and shook my hand, saying, "That's how we are, too," referring to Mother Theresa.

A woman visiting from another colony had proclaimed to me that these children were poorly disciplined. She had a strap in her pocket and was the school mother, the wife of the German teacher, on her colony.

The gift to me this year was a pair of feather pillows as well as the goose and all the little thoughtful items the families gave to me. As always, it was a humbling moment.

The new year started well, although German school was now starting at 3:40 p.m. One of the girls asked if I felt pushed out and I replied that I did. Another said that I could stay if I wanted to. I did stay, but only because I had not had time enough to get ready to go. As I did my marking and cleaned my desk, I listened to the questions and answers in the German school and heard the cooperative way in which the children helped one another. As I started to leave, the German teacher startled me by asking me," How many babies did Herod kill?"

"I don't know. Is it in the Bible?" I replied.

"No. It's in another book. (A woman married into the colony) wants to know. Her colony knew." Then he asked," How did Herod know which babies to kill?" I did not reply and so he continued," It's simple. They struck the child on the shoulder. If it hit back, it was more than two years old." He went on to tell me that the Bible is the most widely published book in the world, in many languages, but no one reads it. He told me that he knew the New Testament well because of his preaching, but had read the Old Testament only to the Book of Moses, the story of the Exodus. He found the Bible not easy to read, but exclaimed that it had the most wonderful stories of all.

I was moved by this unexpected exchange and also a little uncomfortable.

It was my turn as a school principal to give a report to the school board in January about the colony school. My half hour report was well received and I was asked some clarifying questions. I was aware from the conversation that the board did not know much about the Hutterite people.

The wedding on the colony at the end of January occupied everyone's attention. It was a two day affair and school was a wasted effort on those days. Everyone had a fine time. The children were allowed to drink a little beer like their parents and there were many

stories to tell next day. I was invited and went in the company of another elderly teacher who had been at the colony, and her husband. One of the young boys told me that the bride was never coming back. A father told me that she was a fine worker and they were sorry to see her go.

The elderly woman who had come to the wedding with me remarked that she thought the children were so quiet and happy. The German teacher's wife replied, "We are raising them that way now."

I had been giving one of the children's mothers a ride to the hospital to see her mother over the past week. She complained about her husband having to work so hard, of cliques, unfair privileges of some families and the lack of justice on the colony. I only listened, but I knew that problems in the school came only from the children of certain families.

One day my car accelerator stuck open and the two oldest boys were able to fix it and keep it from being damaged. One of the boys was the German teacher's son and he was tickled at the boy's ability. A short time later when the car was hard to start, one of the young boys told me that "they put something in the gas." I knew this was not so, but wondered why he would say such a thing. The same day, the plug-in for my car was badly bent.

Small happenings continued to upset life in the school. Our valentine box was torn up. One of the children's geraniums was destroyed. Bean sticks we had made for counting by tens were broken. The desk was rifled. The attention of the children to their studies was lax. At times, I felt bored and useless.

When mail that I had ready for the county office courier was torn open, I asked who did it. "My Grandfather wouldn't," one of the young boys responded. I was angry and told the children that I would send it as it was and I did.

The German teacher gave grudging assent for the children to attend a musical performance of Rumplestiltskin. When we got to the theatre in town, no one was there. The kindergarten coordinator who had made the arrangements had forgotten to notify us of a change in date. She was so apologetic, but to me it typified the relative status of the colony school in the county.

The children had entered some exhibits in the town school's science fair and had won a second place ribbon. When we all went to view the exhibits, the principal tried hard to get the German teacher to stay and let the children use the computers, saying even that he would displace the class now using them. The German teacher politely demurred,"Some other time."

As Easter approached, again the attitude toward me became one of indifference and shunning by the adults. I understood the religious significance of their act. Still, it was hard to accept. They could ask me to do an errand for them, and next day they would not deign to even glance at me if our paths crossed. I did not belong. The feeling was overwhelming. In preparation for Easter, the walls were cleared of all school items and the room cleaned.

With the eldest girl gone, the dynamics in the room were changing as the oldest children vied for dominance. It was interesting to see that not all the children had this bent.

Playing baseball in late April, the boys managed to halt the game. The strategy was clever. We played with three batters at a time. Three hits and you automatically were out, unless you were put out first. This day the three eldest boys had managed to get to bat at the same time. All they did was to not strike. Like passive resistance, this was most effective. They said nothing, didn't show any emotion, but refused to swing the bat. Disgusted, I eventually called the game when I saw what was up.

The attitude of the children at the end of April had not improved. My car missed a small plate on the centre of the wheel. When I asked about them at the garage, I was told that they never fall off. A couple of weeks later a second one was gone. From the scratches on the wheel, I presumed that the young boys were doing this, probably at some older student's behest.

The assistant superintendent had asked why I had not attended the last two administration meetings. I told him that the elementary school principal had told me that I did not have to come.

At the beginning of June when I had not received any reply from the school superintendent to my requisition for an addition to the school, I wrote him a letter stating that I was concerned about the lack of communication and of support for the colony school. I had felt a

growing neglect and lack of concern for these children and this school and thought that there was a prejudicial aspect to it. I took the letter at noon to his office and as no one was there, left it on his desk. To my surprise, he and the elementary school principal appeared at the school that very afternoon. The children were dismissed and we talked. The superintendent apologized and sent me a letter to that effect the next day. They promised me an aide for the next school term and I felt that they wanted me to stay.

Later that same week, I told the German teacher that the children simply were not working. I described their behaviour and he supported me unequivocally. Again the children were dismissed and he and I together wrote a letter to the parents. "If they do nothing, then we will", he told me. We both signed the letter. The German teacher told me that he was going to put in a telephone at the school and he had decided to accept a microcomputer in the school as it would be good to know how to use to keep records on the farm. These may have been high priority changes on the superintendent's list. While acceptable to me, they were not critical.

The children wrote lines as a punishment for misbehaviour in German school. The German teacher showed me a letter from the county stating that the telephone and the renovations must be totally at the colony's expense.

Despite all this, the oldest boy who was the German teacher's son, stalled the baseball game again. He wrote a profane ditty on his correspondence lesson and got it back unmarked with a chastising letter. The young children asked for the older girls to help them and refused my aid.

The principal from the town school came out again and offered me a job at the elementary school in town. Every year I had contemplated not returning to teach at the colony and laughed at myself when I decided to return again. Having taken steps to rectify the negative situation at the school, I was of a mind to remain. However, I also remembered the deleterious situation at the school when I had first begun to teach there. Unlike the teacher who had preceded me, when the time was appropriate, I wanted to be able to leave quietly, with dignity. This offer made me consider my decision again. When the principal returned the next day with a contract, with misgivings, I signed it.

The last day of school was approaching. Every day I cleaned out another cupboard and was making a list of the children's programs for next year. Supplies had been ordered. I went to the city to buy some new books for the school's library. On the last day, although the sky was grey, we went to the lake to a private beach for a picnic. We had a wonderful day with the children managing to drench everyone sooner or later so that we adults all went swimming in our clothes! Before we had left, I had given the German teacher my letter of resignation. He read it with raised eyebrows while I fought back my tears.

I took the new teacher to the colony to introduce her to them. As I sat in the German teacher's home, I saw him look at me with a tear in his eye. The new teacher was assertive and cheerful. She wanted to take home all the teacher's guides for all the grades. I suggested that she may not want to prepare as she would to teach in town. "Is leaving your idea?" she asked me. "Yes," I replied." She tried to rationalize why I might want to leave, but I did not respond.

The preacher, who was sitting on a bench in the sunshine, instead of ignoring me as he usually did, looked at me full in the face as I passed. I drove away, overwhelmed with my feelings, no longer the English teacher on the Hutterite colony.

5. Four Interviews: Other Teacher's Perceptions Of Teaching On This Colony

At a workshop prior to school opening in August, 1991, I had an opportunity to interview four other teachers who had taught at the Athabasca Colony school. These were the teacher who preceded me, the teacher who taught while I was at university, and two of the teachers who followed me, one of whom is still teaching there. The teacher who had immediately followed me has moved away. At this point I considered that it would be useful to have the experience of other teachers of this colony school as a comparison with my own. I was able to interview four of them, three of whom now teach in the same school as I do. The fourth is the present colony teacher. She has been at the colony for one year only at present, but will return this term.

The interviews were conducted in my classroom at the elementary school where I now teach. All interviews were taped except the first one when the tape recorder malfunctioned. In this case, I took notes which I then verified with the teacher.

The questions asked were open ended. I inquired how each one became the English teacher on the Athabasca Colony, what it was like, and why they left. Sometimes I interjected with another query if I thought it necessary for them to clarify or expand an answer. I have designated the teachers as A, B, C, and D to differentiate their stories. I feel that the interviews are of value to compare the perceptions and actions of other teachers in this same school setting with mine. The teachers were all very cooperative.

Reflections of the Four Teachers

All of these teachers had in common that they lived in close proximity to the Hutterite colony near Athabasca and had some prior knowledge of the people. Teacher B had actually gone to school with some of the younger fathers at Lahaiville. Teacher A was close friends with one of the fathers, who often came to visit. She remarked on the behaviour of the children in her home, how they had no discipline, were not courteous and sometimes "lipped off" their parent. None of the teachers tried to learn about the people's beliefs by reading or research before beginning to teach there.

Except for teacher A who had requested this teaching position, the teachers had taken this job because they wanted to teach full time

and this was either the only job open, or the only job offered to them. To teach at the colony was an entry position into teaching in the county schools. They all regarded the position as having undesirable aspects; the different culture, the isolation, the minimum of resources, and the many grades to teach. Teacher B mentioned the role of principal that she had to assume. She was uncomfortable in that role. This teacher found the colony a forbidding place to work to the extent that she indicated she was physically ill for three months. She also has the habit of smoking. The Hutterites do not smoke so this was a problem for her. She would go to one specific family's home to smoke.

All of the teachers talked at length about the isolation of the colony teacher. They felt very keenly that to have no colleague with whom to share and support each other made the work less satisfying. The relationship of the teacher with the Hutterite people did not fill this gap. Teacher B had a teacher aide for two days a week to work with two kindergarten children. Teacher B commented that the teachers all should have this "moral support". In contrast, all the teachers found the necessity of having to become familiar with the curriculum for each grade, from kindergarten to grade seven or eight, and discovering how the grades are integrated, was very valuable.

Without exception the four teachers tried to keep the Hutterite school children on the same course of studies as prescribed by Alberta Education. The ways that they approached the task differed. Teacher C worked for three hours a night to prepare detailed daily plans covering all the grades. She remarked that she would be afraid of burn out if she remained there a second year, she found the work so onerous. However, her effort was recognized and praised by both the superintendent and the colony. Teacher A had made a judgement that some of the curriculum was not applicable for these children with their limited world view and had deleted parts. She tried to find units that would meet the colony's particular needs and used movies, film strips and tapes and records to supplement the program. She felt that this media would give the Hutterite children exposure to the world. She remarked that her ideas were different from the elders. All the teachers had the students on individualized programs.

With the exception of Teacher A, all teachers used the elementary school library in the nearby town to supplement the reading material at the colony school.

Evaluating the children's progress, Teacher B had put a grade six student back a grade in reading because of lack of ability. This caused much ill will. Teacher C had left two students in grade one a second year in language arts. She explained to the parents that as English was their second language, the children needed the second year. With the explanation, the parents accepted this. Teacher D felt that because the program was individual and articulated, there would be no need to repeat a grade for a child. The child would merely carry on where he had left off the previous year.

All of the teachers remarked on the kindness and generosity of the colony people. They had all shared in the bountiful gifts of produce and baking. Dinner was taken with the people in the kitchen. The also observed that it was necessary to work closely with the colony people. That the parents were the children's first and most influential teachers was recognized by all the teachers.

Teacher A did not work with the German teacher because she deemed him mean and strict. Because of her different ideas, she told, not asked, the preacher if she wanted something for the school. On one occasion, she had the father who visited her sign a permission slip, instead of the German teacher or preacher. While Teacher A did think the Hutterites were religious, she also stated that they had the same faults as everyone else. They were alcoholics, they took other people's things and committed adultery. Going to church did not make you necessarily religious. The Hutterites had to attend church and were told that they could not do certain things. But she knew that they watched television. They also had tape decks in their combines because they borrowed her tapes to play. She couldn't understand why they did those things that they were forbidden to do.

Teacher B said that she learned to cope by respecting the Hutterite values and sticking by the rules. Nevertheless, she did not remove the student's pictures and work from the walls for religious holidays. When the preacher threw the boys hockey sticks in the barrel, threatening to burn them, just to tease them and to "show control", she thought he was "wishy - washy". She couldn't understand their "double standard" of watching television off the colony when they were not supposed to. At the end of her year, she felt that she did not really know the values of the Hutterites.

Teacher C worked closely with the new German teacher, finding him reasonable and helpful. She said that to prepare a request for

something for the school or the children meant having to carefully think out all the ramifications and be prepared to explain them to him. She felt that this was a valuable exercise for her. When she wanted the children to be able to go to the elementary school to choose their own books, this was the case. She thought that the Hutterites were a very devout people and was very aware of their deeply religious life.

Unlike the previous teachers, Teacher D stressed the culture of the Hutterites. She had made a couple of gaffs by at first sitting in the wrong part of the kitchen to eat and by not preparing the Christmas concert in time or with enough serious intent. She stated that it took the people almost the whole year to accept her. She is determined to stay to make "rhyme or reason of it all".

Although asked about discipline in the classroom, Teachers A and B stated that they had no serious problems. Teacher C wanted to handle the discipline in the classroom herself and did not want to have to rely on the German teacher or anyone else to discipline the children. At the beginning of the year, when one of the boys did not obey a rule that the group had made together, she used isolation from the group as a punishment. When the class went outside to play, he had to stay in. She thought that isolation worked very well as a punishment. In the beginning, she had to remind the children that they were not to hit each other in school. She realized that this was due to the children being siblings and cousins. Teacher D stated that the child's job in school is to learn and not fool around, but they do not all work the same. "Maybe it's all ethnic or cultural, but either they are all for you or against you. It's you who have done the wrong thing." She added, "Or maybe they don't want to, or I don't know..."

In summary, the attitudes of the four teachers to the teaching position and to the Hutterite people had some similarities but also some striking differences that affected their role as the teacher. Comparing my own experience at the colony school with the experiences of these four, I can relate most closely to that of teacher C. Only teacher C, During these interviews, wanted me to share my perceptions with hers and would ask me questions, too. She asked me if one of the young men at the colony had been in the school when I was there, inferring that my problems would not have been the same as hers. Would she recommend this position to any other teacher? "Yes, it's a marvellous experience...for the suitable candidate." She laughed, and commented that this school would not be for everyone.

6. Different Perceptions of Hutterite Ideology and Culture

In this chapter different theories about education and ideology will be examined to better understand the Hutterian Brethren's value system that enables them to reproduce their society and maintain their distinctive way of life. Authors discussed are LaBelle (1986), Freire (1974), Engels (1892), Geertz (1973), and Peter (1967).

Teaching and Learning Processes

LaBelle describes the teaching and learning processes as being either prescriptive or process in approach. The prescriptive approach emphasizes control and top down planning of the curriculum. Paternalistic and authoritarian, it fosters a submissive student. Program content reflects and perpetuates an existing social structure, as for example the social class hierarchy.

The roots of prescriptive teaching and learning to back to medieval traditions, in which behavior is emphasized more than the internal state of the learner. Behaviour is shaped (Hutterites use the word pruning) and the environment is seen to implicitly control behavior. The individual is tailored to fit a given social organization. The transmission of skills and knowledge for job preparation adapts the individual to fit into the existing economic structure. Values are not questioned and learning takes place in only one direction.[1] The Hutterite's concept of education closely fits this description. Education of the Hutterites is not valued for self-improvement of the individual, but to teach the children to obey and revere God and to serve the community.

The concept of education held by the Hutterites also fits Freire's (1974) observation, derived from Marxism, that education is political. Education is political in that it reproduces the dominant ideology in a society in all school contexts. Truth and knowledge are socially defined and legitimated and to raise children is *an active reproduction of prejudice.*

Freire's phrase, an active reproduction of prejudice, is most apt to describe the education of Hutterite children. The children are taught in formal and informal learning situations to believe that what their ancestors believed is good and true. They are educated to believe what their parents believe. The

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1 Labelle lists concrete implications from Skinner's work as they relate to prescriptive education.

resulting view of the world is different than the views of the world held outside the colony. Their world view presents an invisible wall that separates Hutterites from everyone else and protects them from the contaminating culture of the surrounding society, an ever present threat.

It is important to realize that there is no such thing as a neutral education system. As a child in the wider society is educated in the school, in the community and at home, a similar kind of prejudice generated by the culture is reproduced. In the same way as the Hutterite child perceives his world as right and true, this child's view of himself and his world is a reflection of the beliefs that people around him evince. Both the Hutterites and other people actively reproduce their own ethnocentric view in their citizens. It is this ethnocentric view which makes it difficult for us to understand and get along with each other.

The Hutterite's method of educating their children is a good example of Freire's banking concept of education. Implicit in the banking method is the assumption of a dichotomy between man and his world. Man is merely in the world, not with the world nor with others. The authoritative educator's role is to make a deposit of information with the educator considers to be true knowledge. The student is a passive recipient of the knowledge and to be passive becomes his way of being. Banking education begins with the false premise of students as objects; Freire calls it oppression.

Looking from the outside in, with an outsider's values, a Hutterite's life may seem like oppression, limited as it is by its restrictions, conformity, lack of privacy and individualization. Those who are members of the colony do express dissatisfaction sometimes, but I doubt that they would call themselves oppressed. They are very aware of the security that they have, from the cradle to the grave and beyond. However, Freire might argue in relation to them that the world's oppressed are not necessarily consciously aware of being oppressed.

It is also possible for the population outside a Hutterite colony to be enclosed in oppression that Freire terms a *culture of silence*. As our society becomes more technologically advance, many people feel that they no longer have the power to control their own lives. The advanced technological society is subtly programming us into conformity with its system of logic. To the degree that this happens, we become submerged in a culture of silence. Paradoxically, this same new technology is creating an awareness of powerlessness, especially in the youth. School systems sometime reflect rebellion based in this awareness.

An exception in regards to labelling Hutterian education as totally prescriptive applies to their modern, high technology farming practises. For example, when the Athabasca Colony modified their potato picker to improve its performance, they learned from another's experience and by experimentation how to improve the machine. Learning of this nature is an example of Freire's dialectic unity of action-reflection, practise and theory process-learning. The Hutterites utilize many resources to learn, such as other colonies, neighboring farmers, or the department of agriculture, that will give them information they need to be highly productive, excellent, farmers. Thus the economic sector of their organization allows for some creative expression of their personalities.

Both Freire and LaBelle use the term *process method of education*, in contrast to the prescriptive method. As used generally in the public school system, the participatory process method encourages critical thought and reflection in the students. Individuality is fostered and prized.

However, when the English teacher on a Hutterite colony attempts to teach using the process method, the dichotomy of learning styles may produce either passive resistance from the students or lack of understanding. To a large extent, a teacher may have to compromise her notion of what constitutes good teaching in order to teach on the colony, although there are times when both methods may be useful. The community is continually "pruning" not just the children's behavior but also the teacher's, so that educational needs of the children can be met without threat to the community's value system. The prescriptive method of teaching is outmoded at universities today, where reasoning has replaced memorization. Even if the teacher understands the relevance of the prescriptive teaching method to the Hutterite people, this understanding may not make it more palatable.

Materialist and Cultural Theories of Societies

Engels (1892) attributed two great discoveries to Karl Marx; the materialist conception of history and the concept of capitalist production through surplus value. The Hutterite people from the beginning have not supported either of these concepts. The intellectuals who were part of the original movement instilled contrary attitudes as part of the philosophy of the Hutterites.

> The materialist concept of history arises from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that

> in every society that has appeared in history the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced and how the products are exchanged... (here) the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought.... They are to be sought not in the philosophy but in the economics of each particular epoch (Engels, 1892:45).

When the Hutterites repudiated capitalism in the sixteenth century and arranged their communal society, they avoided what Marx termed alienated man. Under capitalism, the family no longer was the unit of production, consumption and reproduction. Man began to work for wages, at a job not necessarily of his choosing, and to produce a product that was not his, but belonged to the owner of the instruments of production. Security was lacking for the worker. Modern technology might replace him. Wages were kept low by competition in the field of labour. While the worker was paid for his time, the commodity retained a surplus value that would accrue to the owner. Treated like an object, the worker so responded. He became alienated from nature, his fellow human beings, and himself. Alienated, he could not perceive his place in society clearly. The Marxist's conception of ideology under capitalism is one of false consciousness that is imposed upon the masses; Friere also uses the concept of false consciousness.

In contrast, on the Hutterite colony, the social forces of production are different. Production is regulated upon a definite plan, according to the needs of the community and each member. The work is assigned to every able-bodied person, as there is need.[2] By his labour, the member earns his daily bread and is provided with shelter and all of his necessities. Each receives the same in kind and quantity. All property is owned in common. No wages are paid. All income derived from the sale of agricultural products in the marketplace belong to the colony.[3] The community is as self-sufficient as it can be. There is no competition among members, but rather a co-operative, nurturing atmosphere that enhances their sense of total security and ensuing peace of mind. Marx promoted a communal system as the ideal society.

Although the Hutterites rejected capitalism as Marx described it, and may agree with Marx's analysis of alienated man in modern society, they

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[2] Even the elderly preacher and his wife worked, being responsible for the ducks.

[3] It was obvious that the Athabasca Colony was prospering. Each year a new farm building was constructed and machinery was replaced or new machinery added. In addition, from their earnings, some surplus would have to be set aside for further expansion, when the colony population increased to a size which warranted it.

would not be able to accept that religion be included as one of man's three alienated elements, with property and industry. Instead of God creating man, Marx stated that it was man who created God, as a way of understanding his own life. Marx felt that man used God as an excuse for his inability to deal with his fate in the world. Alienated man deluded himself. But Marx also observed that:

> To serve God completely, without reservation derived from competing principles, and without the distraction of bodily needs, is the aim of a truly religious life. As a result, religious activity directed against oneself is the inhibition of all those qualities that mark one as a human being: reason is replaced by faith; real love by love of God and real will power by will in Christ. All striving after happiness in the here and now ceases, for only happiness in heaven counts. Man must die entirely to this world in order to prepare himself for the next (Ollman, 1976:43).

This is indeed what the Hutterites attempt in their religious life. Rather than being the fragmenting force that Marx describes religion to be for alienated man, religion for the Hutterites defines and order their entire existence (see Hostetler, 1974:286).[4]

The communal way of living, as divined from Biblical scripture, is learned in infancy and vigorously supported throughout life. The colony is accepted as an expression of the will of God. These strict beliefs, which may not be challenged, provide the Hutterites' willingness to die rather than change their basic social institutions. The basic beliefs are supported by constant teaching and appropriate ritual. The geographic separation of the colony, as well as the symbolic separation by language and dress, are manifestations of the Hutterite's spiritual separation from the carnal world as required by their beliefs. Obedience of the individual to God and then to the community minimizes speculation of a theological nature. Within the ideology there is scope to accept biological, economic and technological solutions to aid in making a living; logical thought and reasoned thinking apply mainly in the economic sphere of colony life. The basic religious beliefs are defined in such a way as to meet the physical and emotional components of human need.

More than just a belief, to be a Hutterite is to participate in a group related religious experiment in which the spiritual nature rules the carnal. All

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[4] Hutterites refer to their uncompromising ideology as "Der Glaube".

that is of God is considered to be spiritual, unchanging and eternal; all that is made by man or is of a material nature is transitory, changing and temporal. A dichotomy between the spiritual and material world underlies the fundamental dualism in Hutterite thinking (Hostetler, 1974: 141).

Classen (1972) stresses that the original changes made by the Hutterites to their social order were significant in maintaining the sect through the years. In contrast, Geertz (1973) emphasizes how religion as a cultural system, gives a bias to all facets of ordinary life. Because it is impossible to separate the secular from the religious in the life of the Hutterites, his explanation illuminates further our understanding of this sect. Geertz explains his definition of religion as a cultural system step by step.

Culture is defined as a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols. It is a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life (Geertz, 1973:79). He defines religion as follows:

> A religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long lasting moods and motivations in man by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing those conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic(ibid: 91).

Symbols are described as being of two kinds that Geertz labels *models of* and *models for*. Models of, which pertain to man only, are linguistic, graphic, mechanical and natural; models for involve communication of a pattern. That men are able to inter-transpose these two models is apparent in their religious symbols and secular symbol systems.

Religious activities dispose man to motivations and moods. Motivations have a directional cast so that a man in certain kinds of situations will be likely to have particular kinds of feelings or to perform particular types of actions. Moods, on the other hand, lead nowhere, but vary in intensity. Their source is what is important.

If a man's symbols or symbol-systems fail him, or even seem to be unable to cope with an aspect of experience, he suffers grave anxiety. Symbols of our general orientation on earth, in nature, and in society are important assets of man. Consequently, in a primitive society, a daily ritual is incorporated in common activities such as eating and washing as well as

ceremonial events because of the need of reasserting the morale of the people and the need to recognize the place of the community in the world.

Men have four perspectives to life, commonsensical, scientific, aesthetic, and religious. The religious perspective differs from the commonsensical perspective because it seeks acceptance of the realities of life, has faith in them, and does not attempt to act upon them. It differs from the scientific perspective because it seeks not detachment and analysis, but commitment and encounter. It differs from the aesthetic perspective because rather than the illusion of art, it seeks the *really real.*

It is ritual that consecrates behavior. Through ritual, the convictions that religious conceptions are true and that religious directives are sound are somehow generated. From enacting ritual, the people come to accept the religious authority that underlies the religious perspective. Religion gives a bias to ordinary life, but the bias comes with the particular dispositions induced in the believer, by whatever means he has come to see his world and accept it.

Geertz concludes with the position that because of the peculiarity of the impact of religious systems upon social systems, assessments of the value of religion in functional or moral terms is impossible. He states that the importance of religion for the individual or the group is that it provides a source of conceptions of the world, the self and the relations between them on the one hand and of mental dispositions on the other. Social and cultural functions flow from these. To what extent a society will be affected by its religion varies widely. Geertz suggests that the system of meanings embodied in symbols which make up the religion proper need further analyzing.

From the carefully recorded history of the Hutterites can be found two eras when their social organization faltered. The community of good disintegrated in 1685 to reappear eighty years later. Around 1818 it disappeared a second time. Attempts to reinstate it finally were successful when the sect migrated to America in 1874. Peter (1987) calls the Hutterites a highly dynamic social group, unlike the frequent portrayal of them as a static society that time has not changed. Peter has examined the evolution and adaptation of the Hutterites and poses some interesting questions. How were the Hutterites able to reinstate the community of goods after so long an intervel? How have they been able to support a consistently growing population on their highly technological agricultural endeavors? How are the individual members motivated to participate in the perpetuation of the sect, disregarding themselves for the next generation?

> The experience and accumulated wisdom of the group...is such that they have learned how to deal with, avoid, or endure hostile majorities. At the same time, they have managed to confine themselves to those economic pursuits which allowed them to maintain their communities. Such a decision required sacrifices on the part of the individual who must confine himself to those opportunities that are offered by the group and forego others that are attainable outside the group; and the group must see to it that the individual finds it worthwhile to stay (Peter, 1967: xxi).

Peter(1988) claims that there is no one theory that encompasses all the data. He attempts to take an analytical look at what is currently happening in Hutterite society in order to discern the meaning of changes and to discover the potential trends that may have a bearing on the continuity of the Hutterite sect. It is his opinion that there is a distinct possibility that the highly uniform development which characterized the sect in the past has come to an end.

He first looks at the religion and history of the Hutterites, acknowledging the fine descriptive works of Hostetler (1974), Bennett (1974), and others. However, while these writers list many factors of Hutterite cultural survival, they offer no theory which explains it. Peter finds that Kanter's (1972) model, based on the commitment mechanisms present in communal societies, has some explanatory power. She defines three types of commitment which contribute to aspects of communal social systems; cognitive, or instrumental; affective; and moral. Of these, the instrumental commitment receives careful consideration. The instrumental commitment confirms the choice of an individual to be a part of a group. Alternatively it may be used to assess the cost to the individual of leaving the group to meet individual needs, compared to staying in the group. The successful elimination of such a mental orientation is necessary for the survival of a communal group. Even more powerful, the right to such a mental orientation which examines the organization and its conduct is simply not allowed. The Hutterite individual is part of the group because he deems his contribution to the be necessary to the group's survival.

The Hutterite people have institutionalized the elimination of instrumental orientations and instead have concentrated on the *wertrational* (Weber's value-rational) moral, affective and traditional orientations of the ideal *gemeinshaft*. On the two occasions when the Hutterite sect was in great danger of disappearing, Peter deduced that the sect indeed was unable to eliminate instrumental mentality in its members of successive generations.

Unable to changes its related institutions, the community disintegrated. The disintegration and reintroduction of the communal community of believers must be seen together. The disintegration allowed disaffected members to leave and the outmoded institutional models to be replaced by ones that more closely reflected the contemporary *wertrational* orientation.

There are, however, many pressures for change today, including: the greater affluence of the colonies that may lead to less austerity and the possession of more material goods; the lower birth rate, causing a slower growth pattern of new colonies than in the past; modification of work roles because of technological change; a more central role for the family; and finally greater geographic distance from other colonies which may cause differences to develop. The ability of the Hutterites to bring their institutions in line with the contemporary mentality of their members, to reflect their idea and material interests, is the challenge.

Hutterite society combines two contradictory characteristics in its daily life, a traditional social order with its ritualized religious practices on the one hand, and the pursuit of rationally structure economic activities on the other. To explain how this dichotomy arose, Peter returns to Weber's theory regarding the effectiveness of religious sanctions in rationalizing the daily conduct of the believer. Hutterites achieved the certainty of salvation firstly by a mental state called gelassenheit which signified the individual's unqualified obedience to God's will, excluding all worldly affairs. Carried out in a community of goods, salvation was certain.

Attainment of salvation was, therefore, only attainable in a group context. Responsibilities were imposed on every person for each other's conduct. As a collective responsiblity, it was mandatory and legitimate to be concerned with every other person's thoughts and activities. The individual and the community equally shared a mutual responsibility for the eternal salvation of all.

As time passed, the self-control of the individual shifted to social control of the group through an emerging network of traditions, customs, norms and rules. Religious observance followed by becoming increasingly ritualized. The religious spiritual creativity of the first generations of the sect became standardized in order to avoid strife when various interpretations of the same biblical passages were given. Committed to writing the services to share, they stressed a conformity and single-mindedness among group members. To assure the conformity, the entire religious institution was ritualized. The religious observances obtained authority and value as they

became the tradition. Today, sermons and hymns used by the Hutterite preacher are the same ones that have been used for over three hundred years.

Shifting control of behavior away from a critical self-examination of thoughts, motives and actions, to the more passive control of conforming group, called for a different response from the members. No longer was their personal spirituality a telling factor because salvation was guaranteed by participation in the community of goods. This shift that allowed for instrumental assessments, was the cause of he deterioration of the rigid, communal institutions and eventually their disappearance. Peter suggests that the religion of the Hutterites is characterized by a dynamic inter-relationship between psychological sanctions, daily behavior, and the certainty of salvation. When salvation is guarantied, the relationship becomes unstable because the psychological sanctions cannot be assured.

Because the Hutterites live as a small minority engulfed by the wider society, Peter states that they used the means of production as a political tool. In the past, in exchange for toleration, they bestowed economic benefit on the host society. This has changed in recent times to *the self-discipline of exaggerated growth.*

Although Hutterite society has faltered in the past, this pattern may not necessarily be a repeating one. The variables of the wider society that affect the Hutterites are constantly changing, yet the qualities of asceticism and gelassenheit are again to be found among the people. Peter terms this the self-discipline of exaggerated growth.

The large natural population growth, from 440 people to 28,000 in the last hundred years, had to be accommodated and the colonies kept at a state of correspondingly large economic growth. This was possible only by the strictest forms of asceticism by the people. As a closely knit kinship group, every member was needed to meet the necessary growth and expansion. The non-Hutterite population, who work for individual gain, are mystified by the Hutterite willingness to work, plan and participate in their communal society. Socialist countries have long desired to see such motivation in their citizenry, unsuccessfully to date. The key to this type of motivation to work enthusiastically rests on the following factors present in Hutterite society: explosive growth, small communities (less than 140 people), self-determining kinship groups, legitimate institutions and the means to transfer power, economic goals that directly benefit the kinship group, all contained within the dominant competitive host environment.

The necessary economic rationality of exaggerated growth emerged just as the economic exchange for toleration with the dominant society was declining. The search for legitimate economic goals is constant, Peter claims, because the cohesion of the group is more easily obtained with than without them.

Despite the extent of the technologically advanced agricultural enterprises that the Hutterites operate in competition with local farmers, they are able to maintain themselves separate and self-determinate. Despite relations of interdependence with outside socio-cultural forces, the Hutterites are able to be socially and culturally self-determinate. The common myth is that the colony keeps itself aloof from outside influences, but Peter does not agree. Instead, he states that social isolation is a cause. The Hutterites have not withdrawn from contact with the outside, rather:

> They present to their membership an active, living and viable lifestyle which stands in contrast to the values and institutions of their host society. This alternative must continuously be of such a nature that it can insulate itself against the encroachment of contemporary ideological and behavioural norms of the wider society, and ...can command the loyalty and allegiance of its members. On these account Hutterites seem to succeed splendidly (Peter, 1967:84).

A major part of Hutterite socialization centres around inculcating in children a sense of what can appropriately be revealed to outsiders and what must be kept secret under all circumstances. The Hutterites do no wish outside interference in any of their concerns. They take care of their own problems and treat the law with respect.

The elements of socialization are discipline, respect for elders, pacifism, modesty, sensitivity to others, sense of duty, and obedience. Recognition of a child's special talents or abilities is by the community. Hutterite parents are typically indifferent to school grades that their children achieve. Restrictions regarding the school program are usually stated in the agreement between the colony and the school board, although this was not true of the Athabasca Colony.

Hutterite society is an adult-oriented society, not a child-centred one. The Hutterites explain the use of corporal punishment as follows: children are disciplined with the strap in little school to obtain total submission. The strap does not teach anything, but is considered a temporary tool to suppress asocial

behavior until self-control is obtained by age fifteen. After that age the strap is no longer used.

Old age pensions and children's allowances would disturb the precedence of the group economic base if they were given to individuals. Recently, an elderly woman from the Athabasca Colony came to me for aid in filling out her old age pension form. She explained that the money is not always claimed, but the matter is decided at the meeting with the bishop. When the money is received, it is for the community not for the individual. She brought an older girl with her, to watch and learn.

Hutterite socialization is not aimed at teaching moral principles from which moral decisions can be made. Instead it teaches appropriate norms. For a specific situation, there is a specific behaviour and morality. Norms have developed historically, codifying knowledge and reason in situational norms. The norms can be justified only in religious and traditional terms. If a modern situation is unjustifiable in these terms it is left unanswered.

Behaviour is most important, more than a person's attitude, values, or motive. "Being of one mind" imposes educational and intellectual limits on Hutterite individuals. The group is stronger than the individual. If necessary, the group can bend the individual to its will or force him out.

The validity of the Hutterite lifestyle can be equated with their religious view of the world versus the modern, scientifically oriented, individualistically styled, secular, materialist ideology. Religion has three social and psychological functions. It gives symbolic meaning to the community and its world; it gives meaning to human existence; and lastly, it overcomes man's existential anxiety. In spite of the challenge of science to the first, and individualization to the second, the unity of these three functions is the major socializing task.

Accelerated changes in the world at the end of the twentieth century may create a need for changes in the Hutterite process of socialization. Hutterites have historically had to adjust to new conditions and they have always been willing to pay whatever price is necessary for survival. They are resilient and enduring.

With land harder to obtain due to cost, and a lower birth rate; with more technology dictating a need for less manpower, the size of the colony by population is smaller today than in the past. Some colonies are specializing in fewer farming products or going to innovative means to establish their

economic base. The Athabasca Colony operate a traditional mixed farm, but one colony from Manitoba that visited was making windows for sale.

Peter strongly believes that Hutterites should want to be included in the moral order of society on an emotional level. Then people outside the colony can acknowledge them as helpful neighbors, or be proud of the successful farming that their hard work achieves. The Hutterites should not be indifferent to the outside community if they desire understanding. To contend with changing conditions that they may never have had to deal with before, the leadership of the Hutterite people will have to be intelligent and flexible. Peter's closing thoughts apply to everyone, but seem especially appropriate for the English teacher on a Hutterite colony:

> Cultural enlightenment is an upward struggle to discover the humanity which is common to all of us...Accurate information about Hutterites and the establishment of moral relations with them does not resolve the basic cultural and economic conflict... But these positive steps alter the conflict, moderate it, and make it one more social problem that can be handled by reasonable policies, mutual accommodation, and restraint (1967:224).

7. IN CONCLUSION

Like peeling off the layers of an onion, one layer at a time, each layer revealing a little more, so it was with my experiences on the Athabasca Hutterite Colony. When I first arrived, I could not see or hear the meaning in what occurred around me. While I was not critical or uncaring, there was nothing in my background to prepare me for working in a foreign culture, one that surprisingly, was not very far from home.

When I began teaching at the colony, I brought with me my ideas about education and my values and many trappings of the outsider's culture. Because of my ignorance of the Hutterite's beliefs and values, there was conflict. Not understanding the sources of conflict, they were not easy for me to resolve nor to accept. It is these reoccurring themes causing cultural contradictions that, as a teacher, I wish to address in this final chapter. The significant themes are: the solidarity of the communal group and its corollary, the exclusion of others ; the piety and Christian virtue of the Hutterian Brethren; and lastly, the establishment of authority and respect for authority on the colony.

Colony Community Solidarity and Community Exclusivity

When I first taught at the colony, I believed that it was because I was new that I was not accepted fully, but the status of the outsider has much more significance than that. There is no way that I can be a Hutterite. I was told this explicitly by one of the older boys when I first began to teach on the colony. As a result, there is no way that I would ever be fully accepted. In the later years of my teaching at the colony, I did ponder what it would mean personally to become a Hutterite. The benefits are many. All of a member's physical needs are met; everyone has meaningful work to do; psychological and social needs are met through interpersonal relationships with kin groups and networking with other colonies of the same leut. To me, it seems that the exclusivity of the colony is not so much a keeping out of outsiders as it is the attraction of their own way of life for the Hutterite.

The colony builds solidarity among its members by the way that it educates and socializes the children, from the time that they are infants on through adulthood. The infant is socialized to recognize and accept all the members of the colony; the same child is taught to be fearful of and aloof with strangers. While some outsiders may serve the colonies needs and are treated well, the same people may at times be spoken of with derision, an attitude that the children adopt. In the schoolroom, a student who one day had been working well and was cooperative would become unresponsive both to me and

to the lessons. In the classroom, this shift in attitude was puzzling to me and frustrating as I did not know its cause or cure.

When a child begins school, his world has predominantly been the colony and perhaps his mother's home colony where the food, dress, language, norms of responding to one another, and the colony environment are virtually the same. This child's world view is not the same as that of a child who does not live on the colony.

Christian Piety Of The Hutterites

Like many teachers, my background is nominally Christian. However, a Christian who is not baptised as a mature adult, an Anabaptist, renouncing all others and all things before God, is too much with the world and will never achieve the salvation that a Hutterite believes will someday be his. This world is not his home. The Hutterite is on this earth to work and subsist and to be a living example of his religious belief. He does this by his obedience to God and his community. His death will bring his heavenly reward.

From the time of the Hutterite child's birth, someone says a prayer for him and he soon learns to fold his hands in a position of prayer while the adult says the prayer. In little school, the toddler learns simple prayers and verses. Prayer before and after meals, in school , at church, at bed time; prayer is a real and obvious ritual of each day. The hands automatically assume the proper position. Prayer cannot be silent, I was told. For me to meditate silently would be a useless gesture to the Hutterite.

During each year, at times of religious significance like Easter and the Epiphany, some of the Hutterite people who just the day before had been very friendly to me, would avert their eyes and ignore me when we passed on the sidewalk. In the beginning, I questioned myself, wondering if I had in some way offended the people. Later, I began to understand that it was a way of expressing their piety that excluded me, the unworthy outsider. Even the children sometimes acted this way toward me. Sometimes, even their big Newfie dog... so I felt.

During these times, I felt distant and withdrawn from all the colony people and a positive teaching environment became very difficult if not impossible to achieve. To demonstrate the Christian virtues in daily living was not enough if you were not Hutterite. To profess to be an adherent of the Christian church was not enough. It is interesting to contemplate how the Hutterites must equate Christian charity with the rest of society.

Despite the negative impact that this ostracism had for me, another effect of living and working with these sincerely religious people was that my own spiritual nature slowly blossomed. I returned to attending church faithfully for a period of a four years, slowly drifting away only after I had left the colony.

Authority Patterns on The Colony

The education that a potential teacher obtains during the years at university stresses a style of classroom management, organization, and pedagogy that bears very little resemblance to that practiced on a Hutterite colony. This is mainly because of the authority patterns reproduced on a Hutterite colony.

While the Hutterite child learns the religious ethos of his community, he also begins to learn the authority patterns on the colony. From infancy he learns that the preacher's word is paramount on the colony because he has been chosen to see that the community follows in God's way. He learns that men have precedence over women, which is practiced from childhood, boys have authority over girls. He learns that age brings authority and respect which is manifest in the job roles and council elders' positions. Finally, he learns that the authority of God rules over all. Although the training of the children is the obligation of the entire community, from school age the children are the special responsibility of the German teacher. Obedience is taught to the children by the German teacher, at meal times, at work, and in German school. Punishment is used to reprove misbehaviour.

Like the rituals that daily express the religious beliefs of the people, the authority patterns are expressed over and over in the course of a day. This does not mean that there never is any dissension on the colony. Differences are encouraged to be talked out and resolved. A group of elders is elected (by the men only) to look after colony affairs in a democratic fashion. While teenagers are allowed to engage in foolish antics, those who are baptised into the church are expected to live in obedience to God's will for them. When on the colony property, this seems to be true, but when in town, off the colony, activities like watching television or listening to music may take place. The baptised members of the community are admonished to watch over their fellows, to guide each other in how they should live in order to achieve salvation. Minor transgressions are forgiven because the Hutterites acknowledge their human frailties.

The lines of authority practiced on the colony leave the teacher without much personal authority. Her authority then, must be augmented by the

German teacher whose responsibility the children are. German school that teaches the German language, and Bible verses, hymns, and prayers has much more status than English school that is needed only for basic literacy and numeracy. German school is taught using a prescriptive method of pedagogy (Labelle, 1986). With the prescriptive method of teaching, the strap or other punishment is used for compliance. The English teacher has been educated to use process methods, but the children do not function well when they are given choice and allowed open ended activities. With the process method, encouragement of the student and open discussion of how to obtain educational objectives is very different. For students who have been trained in an authoritative environment since infancy, rules of fairness and cooperation with consequences for breaking the rules are not effective if the teacher does not have sufficient authority.

Conflict Resolution

Because colony solidarity and exclusivity, Christian piety, and the patterns of authority are firmly interwoven into the daily life of the colony, they impacted on the relationships and interaction that occurred in the school. Frequently the result was conflict, conflict between the children and myself, conflict between different factions of the children and sometimes conflict only within myself. When I was able to recognize the problem, I understood why I had not been able to change the tenor in the classroom in any lasting way over the six years that I had taught there. There really was no way to resolve the conflict.

I understood how vital it had been for me to have had an understanding, trusting and cooperative superintendent in the first years. I realized, too, that my relationship with the German teacher was very important. He could be the key to knowing what was appropriate to be taught to the children and the proper code of behaviour for them.

While some people may argue that the entire Alberta curriculum of studies should be taught to the Hutterite children, from my experience, without some modification, I would find it difficult to agree. Because of the closed environment in which they live, their experience that they bring to their learning is different from children outside of the colony. Much of the social studies and science materials are meaningless to them. The content of many stories in the readers also has no basis in their experience. Music is too culture laden to be accepted by the colony. Competition of any sort is foreign to their egalitarian communal spirit.

Each colony has some autonomy to arrange these matters for itself, or at meetings of the leut these issues may be discussed and decided for the group. It is my opinion that it is realistic to emphasize basic literacy and numeracy for the children on the colony and to modify the other suitable programs to match their interest or prior knowledge. For an ambitious student, more material can be provided. This is already being done in the south of the province where there are many colonies in close proximity. In northern Alberta, where Hutterite colonies are more dispersed, it would still be a boon to teachers on these colonies to have more appropriate materials to teach. Why couldn't a loose organization of local Hutterite teachers meet at set times to discuss materials, resources, problems and solutions, and other ideas? This could relieve some of the isolation that Hutterite teachers suffer from.

In practice, I was not given much advice regarding the curriculum. I felt that the colony maintained control really by not explaining and by letting me continue until what I was trying became too troublesome, or the children without warning would no longer participate (passive resistance). On occasion, a direct request would be made to desist with some activity. The hidden curriculum of the colony made me uneasy, especially when I was planning a new activity. I wondered if on some colonies more accommodation was made to assist the English teacher to know and to deliver the kind of education the community wanted the children to have.

Constant criticism of the discipline in the school seemed unfair. I had observed their children in other settings on the colony and their behaviour did leave something to be desired. If they were unruly at home, why should they be different in school? The use of corporal punishment was not familiar to me. I did not like it or use it. Hutterite authority has to establish order in English school. On the colony, this is the authority that is obeyed. It is not effective to simply say that the teacher is too easy or to use the strap... This problem arises mainly from the use of prescriptive teaching in German school and process teaching in English school.

Would a male teacher of English school fare any better? Although many teachers have used the colony school as an entry point into the County school system, never has a man done so at this school. Although on the colony man rules over woman and children, if the man is not a Hutterite, the respect offered to him, in my opinion, would be that of an outsider.

Final Thoughts

Despite all of the problems that came with this teaching assignment, my years at the Athabasca Colony as the English teacher have become part of my

special history that I treasure. As I struggled with the problems and frustrations, I had a chance to expand my understanding of another culture. As I came to know the children, I admired their strong characters and honesty. The people were unfailingly kind to me, giving me small gifts sometimes, and always sending home a share of whatever was baked. I tried to return their kindnesses by running errands in town for the women, sometimes giving a ride to visit a family member in hospital, or by giving them something from my house that they could use.

The Hutterite people on the Athabasca Colony demonstrate a moral commitment to the wider community.[1][When disaster struck in the form of a tornado, the Hutterite men were there the next morning to help the farmers who had suffered the devastation clean up the debris. Two summers ago, a large fire was burning in muskeg just east of town and they came along with with a water truck,helping other farmers and townspeople to contain the blaze.

In smaller ways, but just as important, they help and care for people who are on the fringe of society by providing necessities like food from the garden. Incidents that I know of include hoeing an elderly neighbor's garden, moving a widow in town to a new home, giving the peavines to an impoverished family for their goats and occasionally stopping in to see how they are faring. When finished combining, they might help a neighbor. Good relations are important with the neighbor.

An elderly member told me that with other colonies, "one hand washes the other". When one colony was short of feed, a truckload was given to them. Because the Athabasca Colony is the only colony in this area, problems that southern colonies have of other farmers feeling threatened by their financial success and expansion, are not evident here.

Working on the colony made me more aware of the interdependence of us all, of the need to help others when I can, and the fact that sometimes I, too, need help. When my daughter-in-law was dying, the Hutterite people were most considerate of me. In our society, where independence and autonomy are prized, pride often makes the acceptance of help difficult. It is something that I had to learn.

Austerity and conservation are their way of life. Reduce, reuse, recycle have been their bywords long before general society decided that we are squandering the earth's resources. To live and work in this atmosphere made me very aware of our endemic consumer society. I have become more frugal,

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[1]Carl Peter (1988) emphasizes this.

valuing natural products that we can serve at the table and also those items we can make ourselves for our home or for clothing. I am concerned about the natural world, that it be preserved. This effect of their behavior on me is paradoxical however, because the Hutterites use chemical fertilizers and pesticides to produce their prime products. For them, it is a trade off, for economic security.

To me, one of the difficulties of our time is our ignorance of people who appear different from us. Children must have the opportunity to learn more about how children in other cultures live today. We must develop empathy and understanding for each other that will promote harmony in a world filled with conflict. As teachers, we, too, must learn in order to teach the children.

All the members of a Hutterite family have a role to follow that is traditionally set out and when each person participates, lends to the welfare of all. The roles are stereotypical male and female role. They may be seen as restrictive, and may give the role of women especially, a negative connotation in the eyes of modern society. The women's movement would protest loudly at the subservient place of women in Hutterite society. However, compare their stable, warm, secure family life with the lives of many of our families. When I left the colony to teach in town, I suffered cultural shock again, discovering how many children come from broken homes and the dire effect that is having on the children. Cooperation, the idea of working together for mutual benefit, needs to again become a part of our value system. In some schools, the skills necessary to live cooperatively are being taught through comprehensive programs like Quest. The Athabasca schools have embarked on such a program this 1991 - 92 school term . The impetus for these programs comes in part from the cooperative movement that was so prevalent in the early days of farming on the prairies. For the Hutterites, living in a communal system, cooperation is like a second nature.

Becoming the English teacher on a Hutterite colony has challenged my professional practices and personal beliefs and like Tom Wolfe's hero in Look Homeward Angel I can never again be what I was. The personal growth and enrichment that has resulted from this teaching position has changed my perception of what it is to be a teacher and has taught me the value of being open to another culture. Teaching on a Hutterite colony is an opportunity that I would recommend to other teachers.

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